Glenn Garvin: Patricia Hearst's Pathetic Lies

INQUIRY

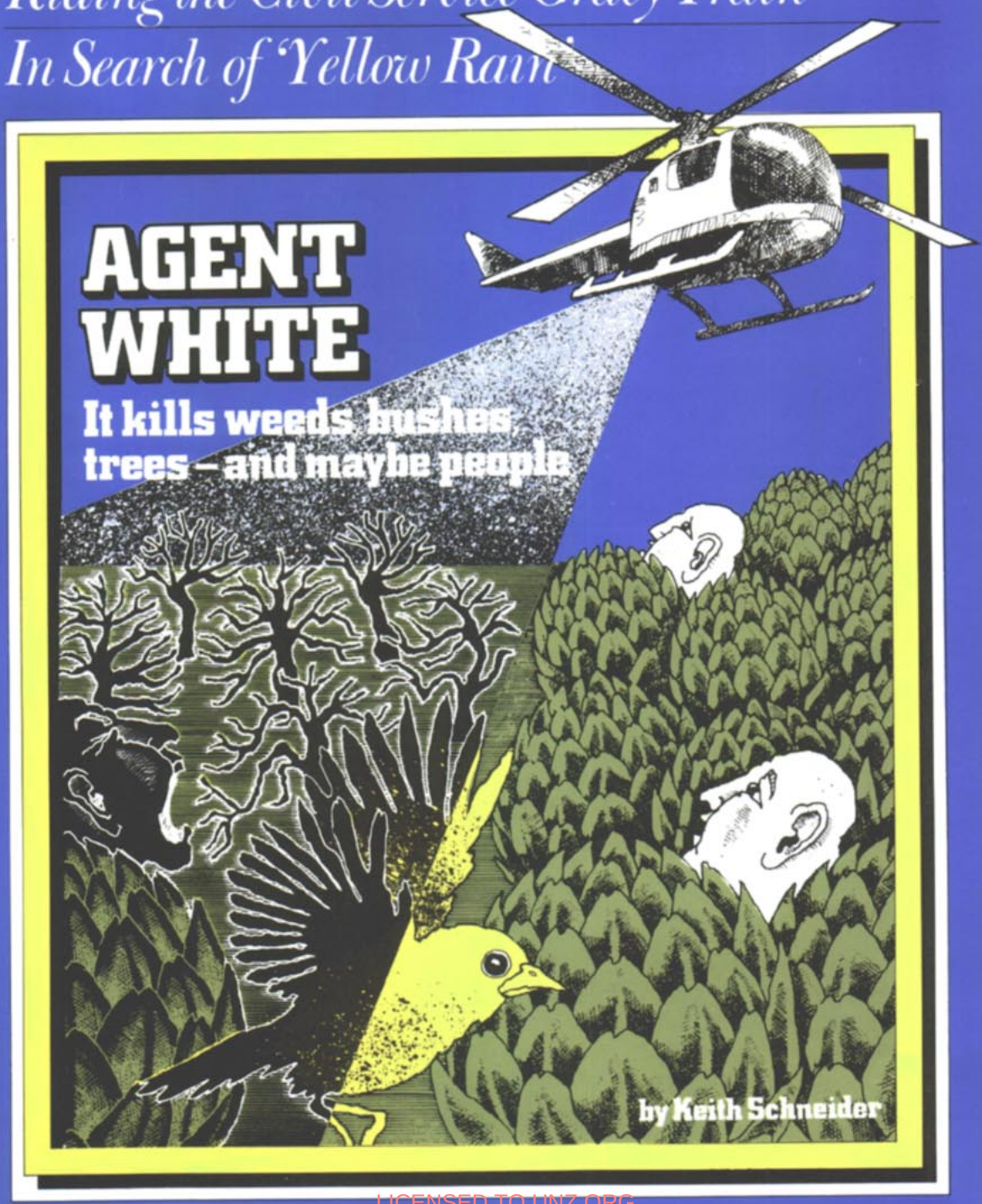
MAGAZINE

MARCH 15, 1982 • $1.50

P. J. O'Rourke: *The Dangers of Safety*

Riding the Civil Service Gravy Train

In Search of 'Yellow Rain'



LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

BLAST OFF WITH FREEDOM'S CHILD !

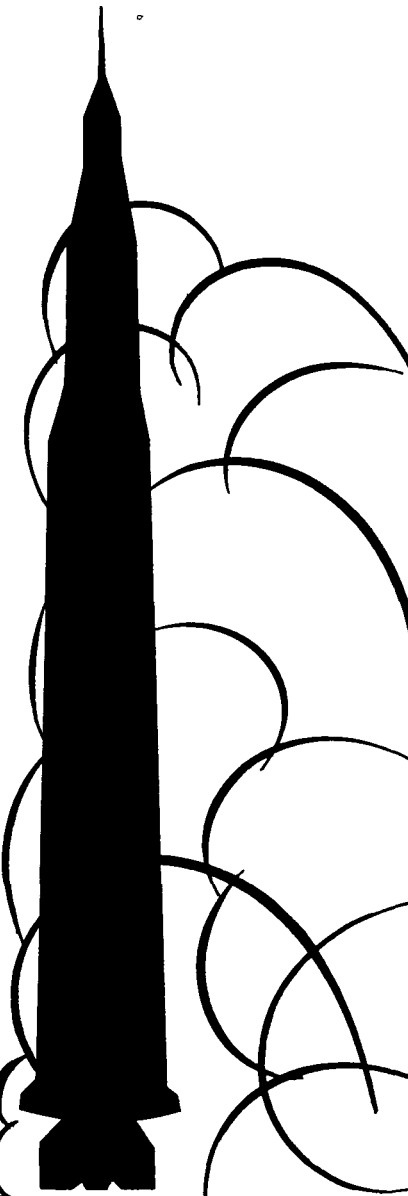
A refreshingly new literary journal dedicated to liberty, justice, and individualism. A POSITIVE concept, featuring today's and yesterday's freedom-minded poets, writers, and artists.

The expression of artistic emotion has been a significant factor in shaping mankind's culture, traditions, ideology, and personal attitudes.

The basic premise of FREEDOM'S CHILD is that of the State as the major causative agent of suppressed expression in the arts.

FREEDOM'S CHILD features poetry, short stories, essays, reviews of books, plays, and music.

DISCOVER the wonderful world of FREEDOM'S CHILD - a new adventure in ART! Your first issue is absolutely FREE. Just return the coupon.



FREE ISSUE

I want to BLAST OFF with your free offer! Send me an issue of FREEDOM'S CHILD. If I like it I will pay you $10 for one year (4 more issues). If I decide not to subscribe, I will mark 'cancel' on the bill and return it, with no further obligation.

Name _____

Street _____

City/State/Zip _____

Mail to: ANLICIAN ENTERPRISES
P.O. Box 971-I
Grover City, CA 93433

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

INQUIRY®

MARCH 15, 1982

Agent White

KEITH SCHNEIDER **p. 14**

For the defoliation jobs Agent Orange couldn't finish, the Army called in Agent White. Now that herbicide is being dumped by the ton across America. Is it poisoning the people of Cherokee County, North Carolina?

Uncivil Servants

DIANNE KLEIN **p. 20**

Fat pensions, snazzy perks, jobs that are impossible to get fired from, the right to bop to the radio on the job? The only thing worse than civil service is civil-service reform.

COLUMNS & REVIEWS

Inquiries ..... **p. 3**
Nuclear Pollyannas; Baltic bailout; The Iran papers.

Letters ..... **p. 6**

The Therapeutic State ..... **p. 7**
Safety Nazis. Look out for this truly dangerous vanguard that seeks to torture us with childproof bottle caps and trammel freedom, liberty, and the right to have noisy parties. *(P. J. O'ROURKE)*

Politics ..... **p. 9**
Lost cruises. Forget all the arguments against putting more nuclear weapons in Europe. The vaunted new missiles don't even work. *(FRED KAPLAN)*

Corporate State ..... **p. 12**
Keeping blacks in the red. The government's bid to buy off black discontent and breed capitalists with SBA minority loans is marked by scandal and failure. *(ALAN CRAWFORD)*

Books ..... **p. 26**
Gene Lyons on *Yellow Rain*, by Sterling Seagrave; Glenn Garvin on *Every Secret Thing*, by Patricia Campbell Hearst.

Film ..... **p. 33**
Stephen Harvey on *One From the Heart*, directed by Francis Coppola.

Cover illustration by PAT MORRISON

INQUIRY MAGAZINE (ISSN 0148–5008) Volume 5, Number 5, March 15, 1982. Published semimonthly except for January, June, July, and August, when monthly. INQUIRY is published by the Libertarian Review Foundation, 1320 G Street, S.E., Washington, D.C. 20003. Editorial and advertising offices: 1320 G Street, S.E., Washington, D.C. 20003, (202) 547-2770. Second-class postage paid at Washington, D.C., and additional mailing offices. Annual subscription price: $15.00; single-copy price: $1.50. Overseas subscription price: $27.50 surface mail; $50.00 airmail. Send subscription requests and address corrections to P.O. Box 693, Englewood, CO 80151. POSTMASTER: Send address corrections to P.O. Box 693, Englewood, CO 80151.

Copyright 1982 by the Libertarian Review Foundation.

A WORD FROM THE PUBLISHER

TELL A BIG ENOUGH LIE often enough, it's said, and everyone will start to believe it. One of the most tenacious lies in the world of politics today is to describe the coercive collaboration between certain corporations and government as "free enterprise." The corporate state, of course, has little to do with either freedom or enterprise, but you'd never know it from hearing Ronald Reagan and most other politicians talk about "preserving our great free-enterprise system" with hidden subsidies, loan guarantees, and fat government contracts.

Redistributing wealth from taxpayers to favored businesses should be a sufficiently frightening perversion of the meaning of free enterprise. But cozy arrangements between businesses and government take on an even ghastlier aura when, as our story on the herbicide Agent White illustrates, they threaten not only our money but also our lives.

GLENN GARVIN, Editor
RALPH RAICO, Senior Editor
JONATHAN MARSHALL, Associate Editor
JOHNNY GREENE, Associate Editor
JACK SHAFER, Managing Editor
LAWRENCE G. PROULX, Copy Editor
LEE WILLIAMS, Research Associate
DENNIS CAUCHON, Librarian

MARTY ANDERSON, Art Director
COLLEEN CREACY, Production Manager
BRENDA THOMPSON, JULIE CLARK, Staff

CHRIS HOCKER, Publisher
ALEX REYES, Advertising Director

WILLIAM ABRAHAMS, BARTON J. BERNSTEIN, FRANK BROWNING, DIANE DIVOKY, PENNY LERNOUX, MICHAEL MCMENAMIN, CLARK NORTON, EARL C. RAVENAL, MURRAY N. ROTHBARD, WILLIAM SHAWCROSS, ROSE STYRON, THOMAS SZASZ, NICHOLAS VON HOFFMAN, Contributing Editors; STEPHEN HARVEY, Film; DANA GIOIA, Poetry

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

RES PUBLICA

Artists, keep those ears on

■ The private art market [in the Netherlands] is in an abiding coma. So half the country's full-time painters and sculptors—about 3,300—are selling everything they paint or sculpt to the government. For their efforts, the government is paying them $48 million a year. . . . Much of it ends up moldering in the basements of government warehouses. The tally of *objets d'art* in the Dutch stockpile is currently nudging 500,000. . . .

"The art-buying committees don't judge only on artistic criteria," [Evert van Straaten, storer of the art] says. "They must think that perhaps if they don't buy, the artist will have a psychological crisis."

—*Wall Street Journal, Jan. 7, 1982*

Soon to be an NBC series

■ [The United States International Communications Agency] estimated a worldwide audience of 260 million viewed 30 minutes of the 90-minute special ["Let Poland Be Poland—A Day of Solidarity With the Polish People"]. However, reports from Europe, where the broadcast was limited, were not as glowing. The *London Daily Mail* called the program "a devastating global flop." An editor for Swiss Television . . . claimed that one in 100 people watched it.

—*Broadcasting, Feb. 8, 1982*

Mission: Accomplished

■ FBI Director William Webster said yesterday the FBI has never confirmed reports of a Libyan hit squad being in the United States and acknowledged the information may have been planted to make U.S. officials look silly.

—*San Francisco Chronicle, Jan. 4, 1982*

Oh, shut up

■ This worldly, happy man [FDR], so utterly without unctuous piety, was in fact a spiritual leader. "The only thing we have to fear is fear itself," he said—and the country nearly wept with relief.

—*The New Republic, Jan. 27, 1982*

The bureaucracy according to Moses

■ [James Isom, director of Ventura County Public Social Services in California] fired off a memo to the agency's 600 employees, outlining 10 "commandments" to stop the "bizarre things that are taking, or have taken place in some of the agency facilities."

For one, the memo said, "employees will not use the brown mail to distribute pills, marijuana, or any substance or item not pertaining to county business."

Nor, it added, will employees "sleep or lie down in the work area." Furthermore, it said, "employees will not wash or dry their hair after reporting for work. . . ."

And, "employees will not babysit their children in the work area."

—*Los Angeles Times, Jan. 20, 1982*

Discovering our direct-mail gap

■ Propaganda postcards from thousands of Soviet youths urging an end to the "reckless arms race" are snarling postal operations at NATO headquarters, an official says.

Since mid-December, the North Atlantic Treat Organization has received seven mail sacks bulging with season's greetings and doomsday warnings from Soviet students accusing NATO generals of threatening to blow up the world, according to a NATO official who asked not to be identified.

He said that what may be the first direct-mail propaganda campaign from the Soviet Union since NATO was formed in 1949 has slowed down the postal operation at headquarters here.

—*Baltimore Sun, Feb. 1, 1982*

And cops can call fouls

■ In Italy, if a spectator at a basketball game boos, the referee can send the spectator to jail.

—*San Francisco Chronicle, Jan. 3, 1982*

Helping the truly needy

■ Although the IRS is limiting its taxpayer assistance program because of budget cuts, an IRS spokesman says some groups will still receive help. For example, the IRS will prepare returns for the physically and mentally handicapped, illiterates—and members of Congress.

—*Wall Street Journal, Feb. 3, 1982*

He's there because somebody has to run the giveaways

■ What's a free-marketer like Edward E. Noble doing in a place like the [government's] Synthetic Fuels Corp.?

"I kind of ask myself that a little bit," said Noble, a Tulsa (Okla.) oilman and real-estate promoter who portrays himself as an avid believer in Ronald Reagan's free-enterprise economic and energy views. "If I had been a senator or a congressman," said Noble, who lost a Republican primary race for the Senate in 1980, "I probably wouldn't have voted for the Synthetic Fuels Corp" . . .

Rep. Berkley Bedell, D-Iowa, complained in a recent letter to Noble that major oil firms were lining up billions of dollars in letters of credit to finance takeover campaigns while some of them were seeking help from the corporation for synfuels projects.

—*National Journal, Feb. 6, 1982*

And go to the bathroom before you leave home

■ In a news release, the [California] Department of Health Services revealed to an information-starved public that you should "always make sure hands are clean" when preparing holiday turkeys.

—*San Francisco Chronicle, Jan. 2, 1982*

Hey, buddy, got change for a trillion?

■ Reagan's Pentagon team fears that defense spending threatens to run out of control in the future, soaring above even the $1.5 trillion projected for fiscal 1984 through 1988.

The "gap" between what it would cost to finance the Reagan plan as translated by the Joint Chiefs and the $1.5 trillion in fiscal 1983 dollars that the administration has projected as the cost "could be as large as $750 billion. . . ."

—*Washington Post, Jan. 8, 1982*

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Gallows humor at the Pentagon

Nuclear Pollyannas

FORGET ABOUT 'DR. STRANGELOVE' AND *Fail-Safe*. No science fiction, however fantastic, no black humor, however ghoulish, can ever exceed the real-life antics of the men who devise our country's nuclear strategies and counter-strategies. As Exhibit A we offer T. K. Jones, the exalted deputy undersecretary of defense for strategic and nuclear forces. Jones recently counseled the citizenry to quit worrying about nuclear war. "Everybody's going to make it," he explained, "if there are enough shovels to go around."

Lest you think Jones was suggesting that we'd all be digging graves in the event of a nuclear attack, we hasten to add that he's talking about impromptu blast shelters. "Dig a hole, cover it with a couple of doors, and then throw three feet of dirt on top," Jones says. "It's the dirt that does it." The beauty of the plan, he adds, is that we can preserve our industrial base in the same way, by piling dirt on it—so that when we come out of our holes there won't be a shortage of Chryslers or jellybeans.

So remember your instructions: When the alert sounds, leave your city, being careful to avoid crowded intersections, and go thirty miles or so out into the country to avoid the more inauspicious immediate effects of blast and heat. (Be sure, before you leave, to cover all oil refineries and power plants with dirt.) Dig a hole. Crawl into it. You have up to twenty minutes to accomplish all this. Then sit tight for three days to two weeks while the fallout settles. And, oh yes, when you come out, be careful of looters, pestilence, starvation, and other minor complications sure to arise from a nuclear war. Jones estimates these could delay full recovery from an all-out nuclear war with the USSR by two to four years.

Jones may be, however unintentionally, the funniest of the Reagan administration's defense planners, but he's far from the craziest. A coalition led by Alexander Haig, Edwin Meese, and Frank Carlucci has successfully lobbied President Reagan for the first installment of a massive new civil-defense program that will be expensive, useless, and even dangerous—yet one more signal to the Soviet Union that we consider nuclear war not only thinkable, but winnable.

The plan calls for large numbers of fallout shelters, massive urban evacuations, and the construction of super-hardened blast shelters to protect "key industrial workers" who couldn't leave a target zone. Reagan's budget for fiscal 1983 includes $237 million for the program, over the objections of both the Office of Management and Budget and the Joint Chiefs of Staff, neither of whom consider civil defense realistic or useful.

Even aside from the macabre aspects of the plan, the OMB objections to civil defense would appear to make sense to an administration staggering and about to fall under a load of budget deficits that would have seemed inconceivable just a few years ago. OMB says the civil-defense scheme is filled with unrealistic assumptions about costs. For one thing, the planners didn't allow for any price increases due to inflation; for another, they failed to figure in real-estate costs for building shelters. OMB says the final price tag could run as high as $10 billion.

Silly assumptions, though, are the bedrock of civil defense, just as they were in the early sixties when school children were instructed to sit under their desks to protect themselves from a nuclear blast. One of the biggest is that we need a huge and costly civil-defense program because (shades of the missile gap) the Russians have one. Says physicist Edward Teller:

> That the Soviet Union could survive and become the center of the human universe in the horror-filled post-nuclear war era is due to a great extent to one factor: the Soviets' preparedness in civil defense. This alone could limit the loss of human life in the Soviet Union to considerably less than what it suffered in World War II. The loss of cities or harvests would be insignificant; the Soviets, if their people and a few of their weapons survived, could demand and get food, machinery, and whatever else they needed to reestablish themselves. The Soviet empire . . . could actually become larger and stronger than before.

Teller's predictions will doubtless be good news to the Soviets themselves, who have never had such an optimistic view of the outcome of a nuclear war with the United States. It was Nikita Khrushchev, remember, who said that in the aftermath of such a war "the living would envy the dead." (In fact, the civil-defense pamphlets put out by the U.S. government note Khrushchev's statement, and hint darkly that such an attitude is un-American.) But before we go wildly imitating the Soviet civil-defense program, there are a few useful facts to keep in mind:

1. The Soviet program does not signal some new turn of strategy. It began in 1932 and has essentially followed the same model ever since. That means the program was not devised with the idea of starting a nuclear war with the United States.

2. The statements made by the Reagan administration about how much the Russians spend on their civil-defense program use the same kind of trick numbers that the administration often calls on to support its own budget flimflammery. The administration says the Soviets put $2 billion a year into civil defense, but doesn't mention that 75 percent of that represents military labor costs—which are calculated as if Russian soldiers are paid the same as American soldiers. They aren't.

3. We don't really know very much about the *reality* of Soviet civil defense; all we have are translations of pamphlets that are distributed to Soviet civilians. These pamphlets contain specifications—"A shelter shall contain at least two entrances. . . . A high-strength overhang shall be built forward of the door"—but there's no way to know whether they've been met, and every reason to think they haven't. In fact, the Russians often cite *our* civil-defense literature—which boasts, among other things, that there's

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

a fallout-shelter space for every living person in the United States—to justify their program. But government pamphlets, on either side, do not constitute reality.

What we do know about Soviet civil defense suggests it wouldn't work any better than Undersecretary Jones's madcap plans. The Soviets have never practiced an evacuation of an entire community, even a tiny one. They've never staged an evacuation drill in a major city. The Soviet transportation system is far inferior to ours; the whole USSR has fewer motor vehicles than Los Angeles. (Jones, incidentally, is aware of this; in his rosy forecasts of how Soviet civil defense will perform in a crisis, he estimates that every Russian will be able to walk thirty miles a day while carrying food, tools, and the very old and very young.) Even American hawks concede it would take the Russians seven to ten days to evacuate their cities, which just might tip their hand if they were planning to launch a nuclear strike. Between six and seven months of the year the ground is frozen solid in the USSR, and building any sort of personal fallout shelters would be impossible, even if there were 60 or 70 million shovels around to distribute. And we also know that Western analysts say that just seven Poseidon submarines can destroy 62 percent of the USSR's industrial base. In other words, even if the Russians successfully evacuated their cities and then launched a first strike that knocked out every single American bomber and missile *and* two-thirds of our submarines, we could still render the USSR incapable of feeding or clothing its people, guaranteeing the deaths of tens of millions.

Civil defense won't work, in their country or ours. It's like a Band-Aid for a decapitation. Instead of spending our time and money building fallout shelters, we should be trying to insure that we won't *need* fallout shelters. The Russians are keenly aware of that. They have a popular joke that goes like this:

What do you do when you hear the alert?
Put on a sheet and crawl slowly to the cemetery.
Why slowly?
So you don't spread panic. ❑

A gift of guaranteed loans

Baltic bailout

GOVERNMENT-GUARANTEED LOANS DON'T *really* cost the taxpayer anything, say the heads of Chrysler, Lockheed, and other corporate welfare cases. Well, now the bankers have joined their ranks and proven them wrong. When the Reagan administration decided at the end of January to pay $71 million to American banks, money owed them by the bankrupt Polish government, it was the American taxpayer who shelled out. And not for a company employing thousands of American workers, either—but for a regime holding its own workers at gunpoint.

The bailout came because the Reagan camp didn't want to admit the obvious and declare Poland in default. Normally that would be the function of the banks themselves. But in this case the banks were clever enough to socialize the risk through guaranteed loans, administered by the Commodity Credit Corporation of the Department of Agriculture, which finances the foreign sale of grain. Of the $1.3 billion Poland owes to American banks, about $800 million is covered by government guarantees or insurance. Another $2.5 billion is owed directly to the U.S. government.

This latest rescheduling is nothing new. Some $741 million in Commodity Credit Corporation loans and guarantees came due last year and were rescheduled; another $310 million are due in 1982, bringing Poland's immediate liability from this source alone to more than $1 billion. And Poland shows no sign of being able to pay up: Its credit needs for 1982 are said to be on the order of $4 billion over and above the $9 billion in interest and principal it must pay Western creditors this year.

Many bankers greeted the Polish crackdown with relief—or even enthusiasm—at the prospect of getting the economy going again. "Most bankers think authoritarian governments are good because they impose discipline," said one international banking executive quoted by the *Wall Street Journal*. But their hopes rest on the American government's continuing generosity, while they wait patiently for Poland's generals to conjure up some foreign exchange. "If you force a default," commented one American banker, "that's the end of the ball game."

In a normal commercial relationship, the bankers would have no choice *but* to declare a default, or be sued by their stockholders for negligence. Of course, this is anything but a normal relationship. No banker in his right mind would have lent so much money to a client with such overwhelming economic problems. The only reason the loans were made is that the American government was willing to cosign them. The banks had literally nothing to lose. Now Poland asks for new loans to pay back the old ones, like a junkie pleading for one last fix. Even the bankers won't ante up this time. Poland can't pay, and unless the West pays for them (as did the Reagan administration), or lends more money (by "rescheduling" debts), the banks will have no choice but to liquidate their bad debts and seize what they can of Polish assets.

A default would be painful—but less painful than an even bigger default down the pike if the banks keep on lending to an insolvent regime. West Germany has the greatest loan exposure; its banks hold about $4.5 billion of Poland's commercial-bank debt. In the case of a default, German banks would be hard pressed, but the fatalities would be few. "No German bank is in danger of collapsing because of its Polish loans," admits a top aide to West German Chancellor Helmut Schmidt. The German banks do have a legitimate complaint, however; Schmidt twisted their arms to fork over loans in the vain hope of bolstering the process of liberal change. "Face it, we wouldn't have gone into it [a $528 million loan signed in October 1980] without government pressure," said one German banker.

Having itself intervened so extensively in the commercial-loan market, the Reagan administration is now unable to come up with a coherent policy. Its decision to buy up and reschedule guaranteed private loans makes a mockery of its hard-line rhetoric, but Secretary of State Alexander Haig evidently fears that political chaos would ensue if Poland were declared bankrupt. As Western bankers and their attorneys scrambled to seize Polish assets, the cracks in NATO would widen. On the other hand, failure to declare a default amounts to a subsidy of the brutal military regime that Reagan so loudly condemns. Reagan, like other Western leaders, converted a financial problem into a political one by dragging government loans and guarantees into the picture, and now must pay the political price.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

What can be done to minimize the damage? First, we should resolve never again to make such guarantees. They make the American taxpayer hostage to the whims and designs of irresponsible foreign powers that may be hostile to our interests. Second, the U.S. government should face the situation as a private bank would, by minimizing the loss to its shareholders, the American public, and declaring a default. That would have several positive effects. Some of the loans might be recovered in part through a seizure of Polish assets, which would signal to private banks that they cannot count on bailouts to rescue them from the folly of loaning more to Eastern Europe. The Soviet bloc's debt to the West is already over $70 billion, and it is rising rapidly. Every country in Eastern Europe (except the USSR) pays out well over one-fifth of its foreign exchange—the danger level—to service its Western debts.

Another advantage of a default would be to deflate mindless talk of new ways to salvage the Polish economy with further aid. Zbigniew Brzezinski has urged that the United States and its allies offer Poland, in return for some internal political concessions, an economic-aid package "modeled on the Marshall Plan." But Poland has already received about $26 billion from the West, nearly twice the $15 billion that the United States gave all of Western Europe for the Marshall Plan. How much more does it need?

Then there are those who encourage Poland to seek assistance from the International Monetary Fund. Poland blithely applied for membership in the World Bank and the IMF in November, and its request is still being handled as if nothing had happened in the meantime. (Hungary, also deeply in debt, applied for membership the same week. Rumania, already a member, dipped into its IMF credits after Western bankers in December refused it new loans.) The Eastern bloc, which once scorned the IMF as a capitalist ploy, knows a good thing when it sees one. Third World governments have for years been lining up at the window for handouts; now Poland wants its share too. Richard Erb, the American executive director of the IMF, welcomes Polish membership on the grounds that the IMF can help it "adopt economic policies that substantially reduce the need for future infusions of money." Former Treasury Secretary William Miller also advocates IMF aid to Poland in conjunction with a "long-term economic stabilization program," once Lech Walesa is safely out of the way, no doubt. But the problem with Poland isn't stabilization. It's communism, and the failure of central planning. Even if it wanted to, the IMF couldn't convert Poland to a free-market economy—God knows it hasn't succeeded with Zaire or any number of other Third World countries. Whether the subsidies come directly from the U.S. government or indirectly through the IMF, American taxpayers will be getting a raw deal. ❑

More screw-ups at the CIA

The Iran Papers

CURRENT PRESS REPORTS FROM IRAN *dutifully note the number of persons executed, the progress of the Iranian army in its war with Iraq, and a summary of the latest mumblings of Khomeini. These reports have become so routine that they have dimmed our memories of Iran's dramatic domination of the world's headlines. It's difficult today, for instance, to recall the televised return of Khomeini to Iran or to reconstruct the events leading to the fall of Khomeini's revolutionary president, Bani-Sadr. But for those with an irresistible urge to reconstruct Bani-Sadr's ouster, a set of documents is available in Tehran that gives a detailed account of Bani-Sadr's troubles. These documents are replete with information that would have been unavailable to even the most enterprising or imaginative American news reporter. But this is not surprising, since the documents were written by the CIA.*

As informative and fascinating as these documents may be, they pose several problems. The federal government and the CIA would "prefer" they not be released within the United States. Their preference is so strong that they seize the documents from anyone who tries to bring them into the United States. Although this thirteen-volume set of secret papers is readily available to anyone on the streets of Tehran, including agents of the KGB, the CIA apparently believes it would be dangerous for American citizens to read them.

Readers of espionage novels might find the documents entertaining. Throughout the long ordeal of the fall of the shah, CIA employees at the U.S. embassy in Tehran filed daily reports on what might be expected if the shah's regime were toppled. At the same time, CIA agents, operating under deep cover, sought to penetrate the religious-political movement behind Khomeini. To this end, the CIA sought to recruit Bani-Sadr, then just one of many Khomeini advisers, as an informant.

The world of the documents is one based on innuendo and code words. Operating under assumed names, agents fly in and out of Tehran, contact informants, and deliver and receive guarded messages. Whether Bani-Sadr ever knew who he was dealing with, and whether he took CIA money, is unclear from the documents.

Following the take-over of the U.S. embassy, the documents were confiscated by Iranian militants. CIA employees at the embassy had already shredded them before the militants crashed through the gates, and no one ever dreamed that the Iranians would take the documents—shredded into strips one-sixteenth of an inch wide—and painstakingly put them back together. And certainly no one ever thought that, having accomplished this, the militants would then decipher the codes and release them at the peak of Bani-Sadr's troubles.

Many Americans laughed during the spring and summer of 1981 as the militants denounced Bani-Sadr as a CIA pawn and eventually forced him to flee for his life. It all seemed so improbable. And perhaps Bani-Sadr *was* innocent of collaborating with the CIA. But in the Middle East, where the agency's reputation is so justifiably rotten, the merest hint of CIA involvement can be the death—politically and literally—of a leader. Unwittingly, the CIA had toppled yet another foreign official. Iran was left to the bloody depradations of the mullahs.

Perhaps Iran under Bani-Sadr would have been no less a tyrannical and bloody mess than it is today. But we'll never know. The CIA once again has dabbled in the internal politics of another nation, and once again it must accept some responsibility for a wholly unintentional outcome. The rest of the world knows what dangerous incompetents our spooks are. It's about time the federal government let us read about it for ourselves. ❑

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

LETTERS

Letters to the editor should be addressed to INQUIRY Magazine, 1320 G Street S.E., Washington, D.C. 20003. The editors reserve the right to edit letters for length when necessary.

Rights and wrongs

NAT HENTOFF MAY BE RIGHT about reporters' wrongs ["Journalists with glass jaws," Jan. 11 & 25], but he's a bit confused about the rights of people who have been libeled. The First Amendment protects the press against prior restraint of its stories. After the damage is done, though, the victims of falsehood can sue for the money equivalent of the damage done to their reputation. But, to prevent inhibition of protected speech, the Supreme Court has required that state defamation law not allow awards of money without proof of at least negligence—that is, without proof that a reasonable person would not have believed the story true.

Because the speech is less an intrusion on privacy and more a part of the public debate, public figures and public officials have a harder time recovering damages. The Supreme Court requires that these plaintiffs prove "malice," which in this context it defines as either intentional lying, *or a reckless disregard of the truth or falsity of the statement made.* When the lawyer in the film *Absence of Malice* tells Sally Field that the truth of her story is irrelevant since its falsity is not *known* to the newspaper, he is creating a very valuable piece of evidence that the newspaper is *not* without malice in the sense of reckless disregard. Of course, reckless disregard for the state of the law is nothing new for Hollywood screenwriters. After all, *Kramer vs. Kramer* made its bucks by reviving the "tender years presumption," a dead letter to New York custody cases for many years. But Hentoff should know better, or at least should not pretend to know better.

AARON FRISHBERG
Research Director, Legal Research Associates
New York, N.Y.

HENTOFF replies: The first part of Mr. Frishberg's lesson in the law of libel is already well-known to the INQUIRY readers who have seen my pieces on this slippery subject. However, for Mr. Frishberg's further enlightenment as to what actually happens to so-called free-press protections on the playing fields of libel, I would recommend he read, and perhaps commit to memory, my articles "Burnett and the beast" [June 15 & 29, 1981] and "Miss Wyoming levitates the law of libel" [May 11, 1981].

What the lawyer in Absence of Malice *says is, "The truth of your story is irrelevant. We have no knowledge the story is false; therefore we are absent malice." Now, even if under the dreadful Supreme Court decision* Herbert *v.* Lando *the lawyer can be compelled to testify in a libel suit that he did indeed say this, the operative statement is "We have no knowledge the story is false." How, then, can a jury or judge find "actual malice"? By the way, if this lawyer* cannot *be compelled to testify against his client, what is Mr. Frishberg's letter all about?*

Consumer tips

I GREATLY ENJOYED YOUR January 11 & 25 issue and found it a rather interesting coincidence (or was it?) that both "The Rise and Fall of a Ward Hack" and the following article on drug-paraphernalia laws centered around rather seedy characters named Myers.

As a postscript to that latter article, I would like to add an excerpt from a December 23 Associated Press story headlined "Mass. drug-tool law signed" in the *Nashua* (New Hampshire) *Telegraph.*

Dennis Curran, assistant chief counsel to the governor, said the new law was based on a model statute drafted by the U.S. Justice Department and approved by twenty-five other states. He said Massachusetts hopes to avoid legal challenges by focusing the law only on products clearly intended for use with "controlled substances."

For example, he said small rolling papers designed for cigarettes will remain legal, but those of a double-width size designed for marijuana would be outlawed.

I guess in Massachusetts, joints, like candy bars, are going to get smaller.

ALAN GROUPE
Nashua, New Hampshire

Consumers and antitrust

MICHAEL McMENAMIN'S treatment of antitrust enforcement ["Busting Antitrust," Feb. 15] is a refreshing change from the stale discussions that dominate this subject. But perhaps even McMenamin concedes too much. He is unduly charitable toward Assistant Attorney General William Baxter, who has put three times more price "fixers" in prison (forty-nine) in his first year than the Carter administration did in its last. Indeed, Baxter has vowed that there would be no more suspended sentences. His antitrust division has stopped a proposed merger between two second-tier beer companies by threatening suit, thereby benefitting the two biggies, Anheuser-Busch and Miller. And it is suing to stop a merger between two cigar companies, one of which will otherwise go out of business!

It is irrelevant that Baxter *intends* to enforce antitrust only when it serves consumers. In fact, it can never serve them. Such attempts will harm the operation of the market as surely as attempts from anticonsumer motives. Consumers are best served by competition, which is a procedure for discovering the terms of production and trade that bring about maximum mutual gain. Any government interference with that discovery process harms consumers. Economic liberty need never take a back seat to consumer welfare, and vice versa. The only way to learn what serves consumers best is unfettered economic freedom.

BARBARA STEVENS
Director of Public Affairs
Council for a Competitive Economy
Washington, D.C.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

P. J. O'Rourke

Safety Nazis

President Reagan has grappled with myriad threats to the American way and tossed no few of them. The pork-and-dove barrel in Congress has been silenced. An emetic has been applied to a pair of Libyan warplanes. The air traffic controllers have been sent to bed without their, or anyone in their family's, supper. A truly amusing number of muck-a-mucks in Iran are making like Redstone rockets in the old Vanguard satellite program (a phenomenon every red-blooded patriot assumes is the work of the CIA). And something has even been done about that tired observation, "the poor are always with us"—what with the end of busing and affirmative action, the poor will be, I presume, mostly with each other.

But there is one menace to Western civilization, one assault on the free world, one threat to everything we value, which the president has yet to confront. I speak of the childproof bottle top. Now a childproof bottle top is a fine thing for a child who has no job or other weighty responsibilities in life and can spend all day mastering the technique of opening bleach and cleaning-fluid containers (a leisure pursuit much in favor with children—as anyone can attest who has watched a three-year-old tackle the cap on a pint of bug poison with the precision of a pre-Seiko Swiss watchmaker). But an aspirin bottle equipped with such a device is a Gordian knot to a hung-over adult. Consequently our nation is weakened. Life is filled with pain and sorrow; which fact cannot fail to touch the heart of any perceptive American. Therefore no U.S. citizen with an IQ over 110 is sober after six in the evening. Yet we have allowed our country's most effective headache cure to be sealed like the tomb of Amenhotep IV. How can our elite confront Soviet aggression, lower interest rates without fueling inflation, and draft a viable Law of the Sea treaty when their skulls are throbbing to the tune of the sound track for *Zulu Dawn*? Allen Ginsberg said he saw the best minds of his generation destroyed by madness. I have seen the best minds of my generation destroy a half gross of Tylenol with a ball peen hammer.

There's an easy solution to this. Place all dangerous household substances out of reach in a crib or playpen and put the children under the

sink. But childproof bottle tops are, in fact, only one aspect of a much larger problem. I was depressed the other week and did not know why. My finances were in no more than normal disarray. The girlfriend and I weren't getting along any worse than usual. I was not under indictment for any felony I could think of. Still, I was blue. Days passed before I realized what was the matter: My car was nagging me.

I don't like seatbelts. They make me feel like an eighteenth-century sea captain. If the car is going to have a wreck, that's its business. I will not be compelled to stay aboard. Yet each time I demur at fastening this contrivance the car lets out a horrid electronic scold. And this sound is as nothing compared to the shriek when I open a door with the key left in the ignition. Other rude noises and annoying blinkers are rigged to let me know if I do anything else potentially detrimental to my well-being. Some newer-model automobiles actually have prerecorded voices that speak about one's feckless habits in the tone used by wives during NFL playoffs. I'm told this is the wave of the future. I predict mayhem. All the pent-up hatreds that produce those household slaughters—husbands, driven mad by continuous domestic friction, murder spouse and offspring and hold police at bay for hours—will now be directed at the family car. Once too often the Malibu Classic will inform a drunken gun nut that his trunk lid is ajar—and pow! This is a serious matter. A new family can be had free through various charitable organizations, but a car costs $8000.

Still, something even worse has happened to automobiles than their new-found disposition to whine and bitch. They have become boring and abstruse—rounded about with lumpy bumpers and Targa bars, and, under the hood, resembling the back of an Atari game. For those readers too young to remember, a car used to be a simple piece of machinery, something like a very fast rider-mower but better because you couldn't mow the lawn with it. You started this up, drove off at pretty much any speed you desired, and then exercised a variety of constitutionally guaranteed liberties—usually by having sex and accidents. No more. Nowadays if a car cannot survive a drop from the Gateway Arch or it emits any vapors more noxious than Evening in Paris, the federal government won't let you own it, and what it will let you own you can't really drive because 55 mph is the speed at which a spirited person parallel parks.

Medicines that come practically locked in a Brinks truck, electronically admonishing automobiles, speed limits prudent to the point of cowardice—there is surely a pattern to these annoyances. I purchased a wood-splitting maul not long ago. Pasted on the head was a lurid sticker instructing me to cover my eyes when doing anything untoward; attached to the handle was a pair of nasty plastic goggles, painfully uncomfortable to wear and producing that view of the world we call "fish-eyed" (though if fish really did have eyes like that we would be

P. J. O'Rourke, a former editor of the National Lampoon, *is currently writing a book of etiquette,* Modern Manners, *for Delacorte.*

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

able to get them with baseball bats instead of expensive fly rods). A box of shotgun shells now devotes three full flaps to caveats advising against almost every conceivable kind of shooting activity and stopping just short of warning you not to own a gun at all. And the daily newspaper, once replete with tales of exciting fire and police department action, political scandal, and international donnybrooks, is now filled with items about untidiness at toxic-chemical dumps, hazardous toaster recalls, and the cancer-causing properties of everything good on earth.

SOMETHING IS HAPPENING to America, not something dangerous but something all too safe. I see it in my lifelong friends. I am a child of the "baby boom," a generation not known for its sane or cautious approach to things. Yet suddenly my peers are giving up drinking, giving up smoking, and cutting down on coffee, sugar, and salt. They will not eat red meat, and they now go to restaurants whose menus have inspired me to stand on a chair yelling, "Floppsy, Moppsy, Cotton-tail, dinner is served!" This from the generation of LSD, Weather Underground, and Altamont! And all in the name of safety! Our nation has withstood many divisions: north and south, black and white, labor and management; but I do not know if the country can survive division into smoking and nonsmoking sections.

As once anything was excusable in the name of patriotism, now anything is excusable in the name of safety. We will kiss some low place on every dishtowel-head in the Levant rather than have a single breeder reactor on our shores. We will make every lube artist in America learn Japanese rather than produce an enjoyable automobile. This is treason. America was founded on danger. How many lifeboat drills were held on the Mayflower? Where were the smoke detectors in the Lincoln family cabin? Who checked to see whether Indian war paint was made with red dye No. 2? It was the thrilling, vast, wonderful danger of America that drew people here from all over the world—spacious skies filled with blizzards and tornadoes, purpled mountain majesties to fall off, and fruited plains full of snarling animals and armed aborigines. America is a dangerous country. Safety has no place here.

In fact, safety has no place anywhere. Everything that's fun in life is dangerous. Horse races, for instance, are very dangerous. Attempt to design a safe horse and the result is a cow (an appalling animal to watch at the trotters). And everything that isn't fun is dangerous, too. It is impossible to be alive and safe. It's very safe to be an inanimate object, but the carbon molecules who were our ancestors chose otherwise, and having once set upon a course of devouring things, we must submit to having other things occasionally attempt to devour us. This is painful, but pain is an important part of existence. No amount of hazard warnings on the back of our hand would keep us from thrusting it into a lion's mouth if that didn't hurt. Lions, admittedly, are in short supply, but the same holds true for whirling Cuisinart blades and oil-burning space heaters.

Pain is the body's way of showing us we're boneheads. A child growing up in an excessively safe environment may never learn that he is one—not until he gets married and has a wife to tell him so. (And the world goes hard on single people, who are under the impression they are cool.) Nor can death be avoided. Death is even more important than pain. Death was invented so we could have evolution. The process of Darwinian selection does not work on things that don't die. If it weren't for death we would all still be amoebas and would have to eat by surrounding things with our butts. Also, a lack of death would result in an extraordinary number of old people, and the social-security system is already overextended.

Therefore it is the duty of every patriotic, moral, and humanistic person among us to smoke, drink, drive like hell, shoot guns, own Pintos, take saccharin, leave unmarked medicine bottles open all over the house, get in fist fights, start barbeque fires with gasoline, put dry-cleaner bags over his or her head, and run around barefoot without getting a tetanus shot.

But I don't know how long we will be able to continue like this. The forces of safety are afoot in the land. I, for one, believe it is a conspiracy—a conspiracy of Safety Nazis shouting *Sieg Health!* and seeking to trammel freedom, liberty, and large noisy parties. The Safety Nazis advocate gun control, vigorous exercise, and health foods. The result can only be a disarmed, exhausted, and half-starved population ready to acquiesce to dictatorship of some kind. I do not know what the ultimate aims of the Safety Nazis are, but the prevalence of flameproof infant sleepwear argues that a totalitarian force is looking to use my children someday as fireplace tongs. Other than that, however, it will probably be a very safe dictatorship without the dive bombers, tanks, and huge artillery that are the only fun things about totalitarianism.

President Reagan has shown some promise of standing up to the Safety Nazis. James Watt is as dangerous a secretary of the interior as we've had in a long time. And at least a few of the safetyist regulatory excesses of the Carter years have been revoked—the requirement that all full-sized sedans carry a blimp under the dashboard, for instance. But as yet there is little indication that the president perceives the true lack of danger our country faces. Maybe this is because he has had the experience of being shot. That's fine for him. *His* life is plenty dangerous. But what about the rest of us, the common people crying out for hazard and risk? I hope President Reagan keeps us in mind as he trims the federal budget. The MX missile system looks like a perilous thing, but, if that proves too expensive, he could grant a small increase in Amtrak funding and perhaps we could all die in a horrible train wreck.

Safety has no place in America. It is the duty of every patriotic, moral, and humanistic person to smoke, drink, drive like hell, own Pintos, and run around barefoot without getting a tetanus shot.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

POLITICS

FRED KAPLAN

Lost cruises

DECEMBER 12, 1979, WILL certainly go down as a historic moment in the annals of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization. On that day the NATO countries agreed to let the United States place two new types of nuclear missiles on Western European soil. The decision has brought them nothing but grief ever since. In England, West Germany, Italy, and the Netherlands, it has provoked hundreds of thousands of people, from all walks of life, to rally in protest. It has threatened the political survival of the ruling parties that agreed to the plan. It has set off the deepest, most bitter rift between the United States and its allies across the Atlantic in more than twenty years.

Yet amidst this rankling one rather ironic point has hardly been noticed: In war, the missiles in question almost certainly won't work.

The missiles are the ground-launched cruise missile (GLCM) and the Pershing II ballistic missile, both scheduled to be fielded in 1983, both having the range to hit the USSR from Western Europe, and, most importantly, both supposedly superaccurate, able to land as close as thirty feet from their targets. This sort of accuracy would allow them to strike hardened command posts, missile sites, air bases, and weapons depots. In short it would allow NATO commanders to engage in the tit-for-tat exchanges of a "limited nuclear war."

Yet the problem lies precisely here: Because of technical limitations, likely enemy countermeasures, and the nuisances of nature, these missiles will not be so accurate and will thus serve no useful military purpose that thousands of existing weapons don't already serve.

The cruise missile purports to get its accuracy from a dazzling guidance system called TERCOM, which stands for terrain contour-matching. Stored inside the missile is an array of small computerized maps displaying the contour of the earth's surface over which the missile is programmed to fly. Attached to the missile is a radar altimeter, pointing directly downward, sending out a constant radar beam and receiving a reflection indicating its own altitude.

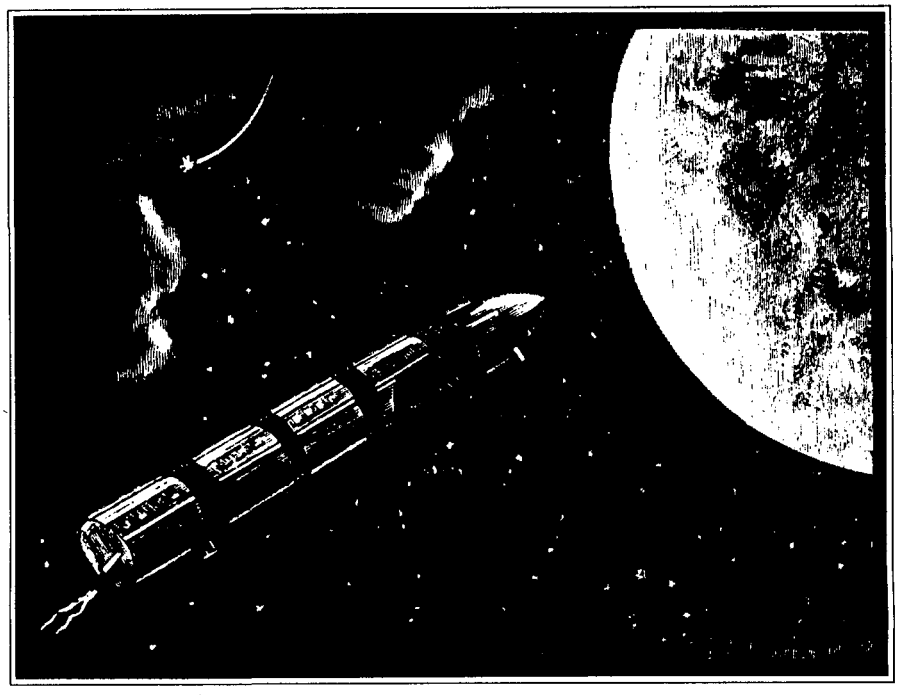
At certain intervals the TERCOM guidance system compares the computer map of the shape of the earth's surface along the missile's predetermined flight path (i.e., where the missile should be) with the actual terrain beneath the missile (i.e., where the missile really is). If the missile has gone off its path, TERCOM sets it straight again. That's the idea. But the reality seems to be different.

First, nobody knows how accurate the missile's computerized maps really are. The General Accounting Office discovered, for example, that during at least one flight test, a cruise missile "cleared a peak by less than thirty feet," and that this peak "did not appear in the terrain elevation data base," that is, on the computerized map. Moreover, an investigation by the Air Force Test and Evaluation Center concluded that this sort of error is bound to occur "in the data base for [the cruise missile's] operational areas," meaning that they will "frequently crash into tall obstacles en route to their targets."

This is officially called the "clobber" effect, and it can happen in many ways. One way is something no more exotic than the existence of huge forests, which cover about half of the Soviet landmass. In warmer seasons the missile's radar altimeter will look down over the forest, "see" the foliage, and measure how far it is above the treetops. In winter, however, it will see right through the bare trees and think it is much higher up than it should be—and come crashing into the forest. If the computerized map instead shows the contours of the earth's surface, and the radar altimeter measures altitude according to its distance from the treetops (as it will in warmer months when trees are covered), then TERCOM will become confused, not know where it is, and get lost.

This problem is not easily solved, because it lies in the inherent nature of the technology. Skolnik's *Radar Handbook,* the standard guide in the field, notes: "Radar altimeters used over forests, deep snow, and deep ice can give erroneous readings. . . . Radar sees some sort of composite of returns from the top of trees, from the trunks of trees, and the ground beneath"—just the sort of confusion that drives a cruise missile out of its mind.

Note that Skolnik also cited "deep snow and deep ice" as obstructions. This is particularly serious over the USSR, where heavy snow covers the



FRED KAPLAN reports on defense for the Boston Globe *and is writing a book on nuclear strategists.*

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

ground for one-third of the year.

TERCOM performs worst of all over flat terrain. Since one square mile of flatlands looks pretty much like the next, TERCOM doesn't know whether the ground observed by the radar altimeter is the same patch of land stored in the computerized map. The missile could easily and unwittingly become hopelessly lost.

Finally, if nature doesn't provide enough obstacles, the Russians could offer a few of their own. Along a cruise missile's likely flight path, the Soviets could place radar jammers that would trick the altimeter into thinking it is higher than it really is, leading it to crash into the ground or the next hill. A simpler device is to set up beacons emitting powerful pulses at key points along Soviet borders. As a cruise missile passes by, the beacons would jam the radar altimeter, confusing TERCOM and letting the missile drift to the point where, by the time a more detailed map shows up on the computer, the missile is completely lost.

Along a cruise missile's likely flight path, the Soviets could place radar jammers that would trick the altimeter into thinking it is higher than it really is, causing the missile to crash.

Are the Soviets capable of this sort of electronic warfare? Read page 37 of Defense Secretary Caspar Weinberger's ninety-nine-page booklet, *Soviet Military Power*, released with great fanfare last September 29: "Strategic fixed jammers are located throughout the Soviet Union. The Soviets have developed their EW [electronic warfare] capabilities into an integrated system called Radio-electronic Combat, combining all forms of intelligence, direction finding, intensive jamming, deception, and suppressive fires from ground, air, and seabased platforms to attack enemy organization and systems through their electronic means of control."

Five or six years ago, nearly everyone in the defense field was excited about cruise missiles, their high-tech wizardry, their promise of astonishing accuracy. In a laboratory or in a staged flight test, they still look good. But in the face of forests, seasonal change, flatlands, or enemy countermeasures, they appear far less impressive.

*THE SAME IS TRUE OF PER*shing II, though the details are different. Pershing is a ballistic missile, traveling from launch pad to target in five or six minutes, thus requiring no TERCOM-type updates along its flight path. Instead, inside the missile is a radar image of the area immediately surrounding the target. When the missile reenters the atmosphere and plunges toward the target, it slows down for a moment, sends a quick radar beam to the ground, and receives a radar reflection of the objects below. A miniature computer, the Radar Area Correlator (RADAC), compares this reflection with the stored image, laying one on top of the other, turning and adjusting them until they coincide to the greatest degree possible. Then, with the aid of an active radar seeker, the missile homes in on the area most resembling the radar image produced by the overlay.

As with the cruise missile, however, reality differs considerably from the ideal. First, the radar image stored inside the missile is probably inaccurate. The United States cannot take radar photos over the USSR. Instead, the weapon designers analyze satellite photographs and try to convert these optical images into their likely radar reflections in a process called "synthetic radar imagery." The military tried this in the early phase of the Vietnam bombing campaign, but with no luck. They finally had to fly reconnaissance planes over the target areas to take radar photos—an impractical solution over the Soviet Union.

If the target is clear and distinctive, like a runway, the synthetic process might work well enough. But if it lies, say, in a valley or hollow—as many missile bases and command posts might—the area could be swampy one day, dry the next, something in between the day after. Yet water reflects radar very nicely, meaning that a wet surface would look completely different from a dry surface when viewed by an overhead radar seeker. The RADAC would find it impossible to match up the two images.

A Pentagon scientist who works in the office that supervises the Pershing II program concedes, "If everything is covered with snow, there is no information content that the system can read." Therefore "it's probably better not to fire the weapon at all and to use an ICBM or something else instead. You won't hit the military target you do want to hit, and you might destroy some nearby city that you don't want to hit."

Then there are Soviet tricks, even simpler than those that could befuddle cruise missiles. The Soviets could simply lay sheets of tin foil on the ground and change the pattern each each day or week. Foil is a very strong radar reflector, and RADAC could not tell what it was. The Soviets are very keen on this sort of activity, as best described, once again, by Secretary Weinberger's *Soviet Military Power:*

> The Soviets use antiradar camouflage to conceal military equipment against detection by ground, airborne, and shipborne radars . . . by the creation of false targets or by blending into the terrain background those objects that might serve for orientation. . . . In addition to natural cover, timber, brushwood, metallic nets, and angle reflectors are used by Soviet forces for radar camouflage. Mockups of military equipment can also be used as antiradar reflectors.

Someone trying to present the U.S. Pershing II as an ineffectual weapon could hardly have made a more compelling indictment.

THE PERCEPTIVE READER must, no doubt, be asking: If all this is true, then top-level Pentagon officials must know about it, so why don't they simply stop these crazy weapons? The first fallacy in that question lies in a crucial premise: Top officials in the Pentagon probably *don't* know much about this. Their ignorance lies not so much in stupidity as in lack of time to look into these matters with great scrutiny. Moreover, the officers immediately in charge of a weapon have every incentive to put it in the best possible light. Therein lie their promotions.

Weapons can always look good in the ideal conditions of a laboratory;

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

they can be made to look good in computer simulations; and the environment can be rigged to promote the appearance of success in a flight test. Aim a Pershing II at a pool of water in a desert, and it hits right on target. Send a cruise missile over smoothly rolling hills with no particularly tall obstacles in the way, and it flies like a lark. When the test results come in, the decision makers are generally interested in few things beyond the bottom line.

A few years ago, an independent testing and evaluation office was established to report directly to the Secretary of Defense. The office kept asking the Army to subject Pershing II to radar jamming in its test flights. The Army refused. The office persisted. Within one year of its opening, the office was shut down.

There is, however, a second fallacy in the perceptive reader's question as to why nobody stops these weapons—the assumption that Pentagon officials would *want* to stop them. From the very beginning, GLCM and Pershing II have been advanced by the government not for their military virtues but for their political utility.

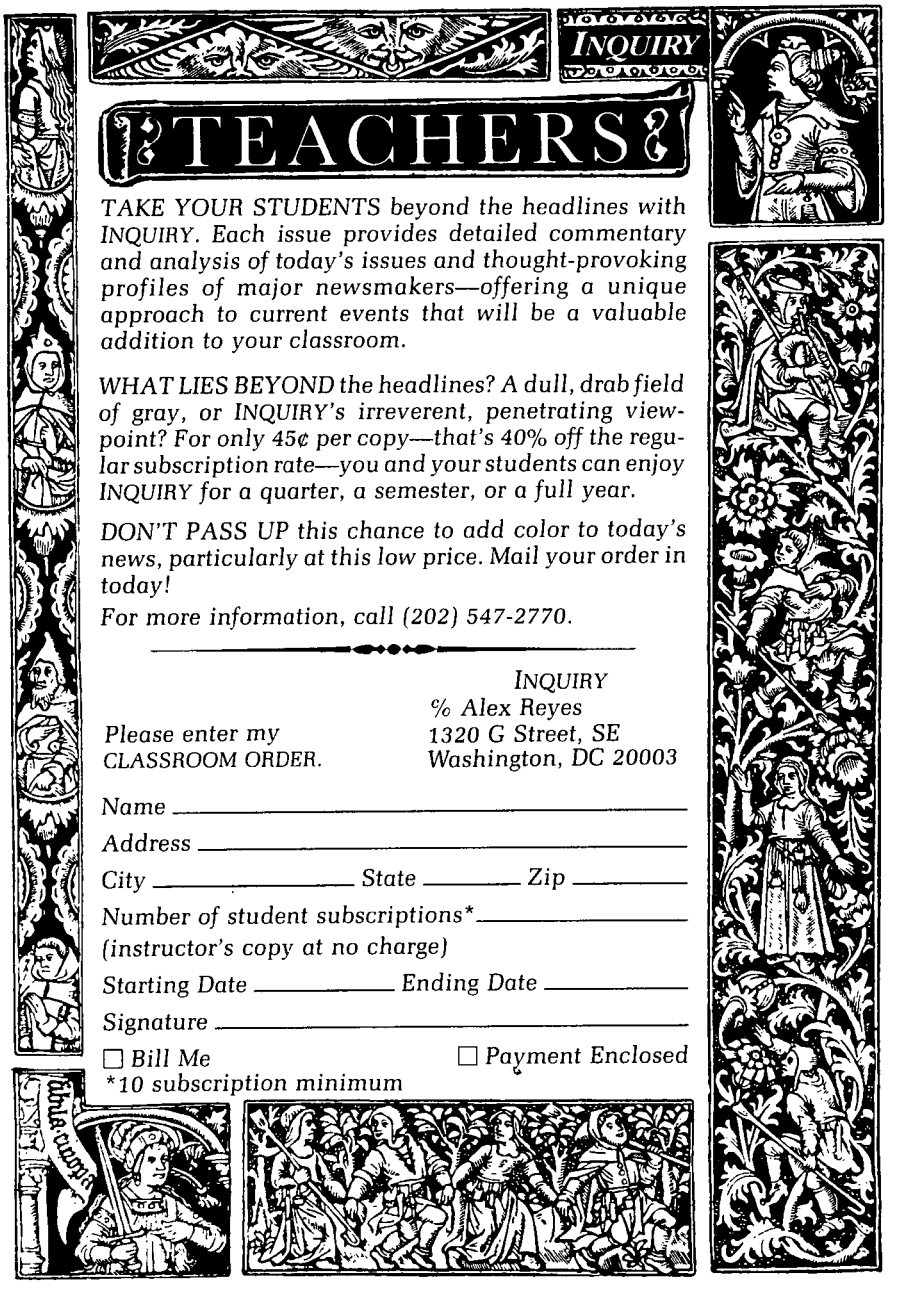
By the end of Jimmy Carter's first year as president, he had jangled the nerves of nearly every Western European head of state. He seemed insensitive to their interests and peculiar political problems. Chancellor Helmut Schmidt of Germany especially regarded Carter as an unworldly bumpkin. The neutron-bomb fiasco confirmed that opinion forever. Unaware of Europeans' jitters over getting directly involved in nuclear politics, Carter demanded that at least one Continental government request the neutron bomb before the United States would set it there. Schmidt, although taking heat from the left wing of his Social Democratic Party, requested it—whereupon, in May 1978, Carter announced he was postponing the weapon's development.

At the same time, the National Security Council was debating whether and how the United States should respond to the USSR's new SS-20 missiles. The military offered the Pershing II and ground-launched cruise missiles. The European strategic community was particularly keen on cruise missiles; Schmidt himself had expressed fear that the Americans were bargaining them away at the SALT II negotiations. The neutron-bomb matter settled the debate. All officials agreed that, for political reasons if no other, NATO must commonly agree to take those two new missiles, that NATO could not politically afford to convey an image of disunity on yet another crucial nuclear issue.

Now, two years after the December 1979 decision to put the missiles in Europe, it is increasingly obvious that these missiles—sold to the Europeans to reassure them of America's commitment—are not wanted by the Europeans after all, that many of them, in fact, perceive the missiles as representing a type of commitment—the willingness to engage in "limited nuclear war"—of which they want no part.

Adding to this the fact that the missiles lack the necessary accuracy for a limited nuclear war, one can reach only two conclusions: First, on any level of logic, they are not just unwanted but unneeded besides; and second, they represent still another in a long series of illusions in the quest for the device that will make nuclear war a rational, controllable art.

One qualification to all this is that the Russians, who have an undue enthusiasm for the glories of American technology, evidently believe that the Pershing II and cruise missile will work all too splendidly. One can only hope that our negotiators at the talks on theater-nuclear-arms control in Geneva can exploit the Russians' fears and free the NATO alliance from one of its most militarily fatuous and politically self-destructive decisions. ❑



TAKE YOUR STUDENTS beyond the headlines with INQUIRY. Each issue provides detailed commentary and analysis of today's issues and thought-provoking profiles of major newsmakers—offering a unique approach to current events that will be a valuable addition to your classroom.

WHAT LIES BEYOND the headlines? A dull, drab field of gray, or INQUIRY's irreverent, penetrating viewpoint? For only 45¢ per copy—that's 40% off the regular subscription rate—you and your students can enjoy INQUIRY for a quarter, a semester, or a full year.

DON'T PASS UP this chance to add color to today's news, particularly at this low price. Mail your order in today!

For more information, call (202) 547-2770.

Please enter my CLASSROOM ORDER.

INQUIRY
% Alex Reyes
1320 G Street, SE
Washington, DC 20003

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ *State* _____ *Zip* _____

*Number of student subscriptions** _____
(instructor's copy at no charge)

Starting Date _____ *Ending Date* _____

Signature _____

☐ *Bill Me* ☐ *Payment Enclosed*

**10 subscription minimum*

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

CORPORATE STATE

ALAN CRAWFORD

Keeping blacks in the red

FROM ALL THE HOWLS OF protest, you'd think the Reaganauts had at last taken the ax to federal programs to aid minority-owned businesses. But you would be sadly mistaken, though such efforts are long overdue and ought to be backed not least by black businessmen who haven't been allowed to participate. At issue is the Small Business Administration's 8(a) program, which funnels federal contracts without competitive bidding to those companies it deems worthy—in short, to companies the existing administrators happen to fancy.

It's all part of the "black capitalism" scheme cooked up under the Nixon administration to buy support from upwardly mobile blacks and to create, by government fiat, a large group of middle-class blacks and other minority-group members who live in the suburbs, join Rotary, and vote for balanced budgets. Besides 8(a), the scheme was promoted through the Economic Development Agency, the Community Services Administration, the rural-development projects of the Department of Agriculture, and the Office of Minority Business Enterprise (now the Minority Business Development Agency).

Despite the efforts of so many agencies, the program has done little to help black entrepreneurs compete in the marketplace. It has produced instead a small elite of participants (many of whom aren't even legitimate members of minority groups) who are increasingly addicted to the public dole. If allowed to expand, the program risks turning minority-group businessmen into public dependents like their poorer brothers on welfare and food stamps.

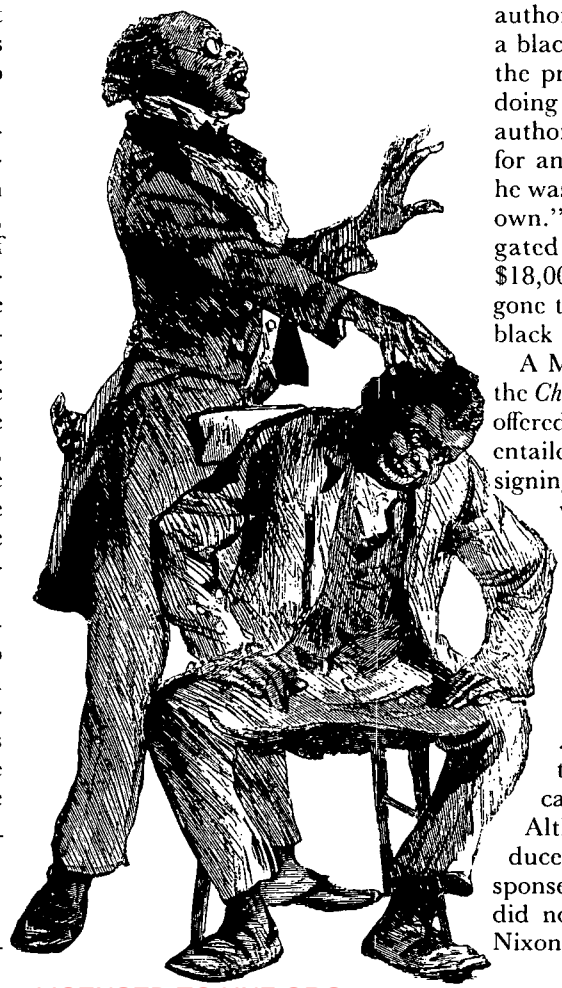
That's at its best, which has not been very good at all. *Ebony* magazine, though basically sympathetic to the program's intent, reports that it is viewed even by many black businessmen as "a mixed blessing at best and, at worst, a bungling bureaucracy doing more harm than good." They consider its loan provisions a "nightmare of red tape and time-consuming administrative details" and decry its failure "to provide the follow-through necessary to sustain fledgling businesses." During the ten-year period beginning in 1968, only 90 of 3723 companies that got the boodle were able to wean themselves from SBA funding and make it on their own.

Scandals abound. Senate hearings found that the SBA program has been systematically perverted by unscrupulous whites who set up fly-by-night companies featuring black frontmen—in some cases illiterate farmers or janitors—as figurehead presidents and majority stockholders. Once these bogus businesses qualified for the money, the white "sponsors" would kick out the blacks or charge outrageous fees for their own management expertise. Then they would issue new stock to water down that owned by the black partners and make off with the profits. All told, federal officials concede that during the late 1970s alone bogus companies like these made off with at least $100 million.

In the early 1970s, for example, a group of white sponsors in North Carolina pulled down $16 million in government contracts by setting up seven black companies, installing as secretary-treasurer a black farmer who signed his name with an *X*. They then charged $4 million for their own "management fees," and when pressured by the SBA to sell stock they bought at $1 a share, they sold out at a 2814 percent profit. In 1972 two white businessmen in Petersburg, Virginia, convinced a black partner to help them get a 90 percent federally guaranteed loan of $350,000 to form a sand and gravel company, then refused even to give him a desk and wouldn't let him see the books.

An investigator for Atlanta's transit authority found one instance in which a black man who was supposed to be the president of a trucking company doing 8(a) business with the transit authority "was operating a bulldozer for another company the entire time he was supposed to be president of his own." The officer said he "investigated and tracked the payment of $18,000 that was supposed to have gone to the black. We found that the black got only $200 of the $18,000."

A Mohawk Indian, interviewed by the *Chicago Tribune* in 1978, said he was offered $150,000 for twelve deals that entailed nothing more on his part than signing some contracts. "The first deal was a $700,000 supply job," he said. "I didn't have to come up with anything. No money. No materials. Nothing."



POLITICALLY, 8(a) HAS been a disaster, at least from the point of view of the business-oriented Republicans who invested so much in it. Although the idea was first introduced by Lyndon Johnson as a response to the riots of the mid-1960s, it did not take form until the devious Nixon crowd took over, hoping that

ALAN CRAWFORD is the author of Thunder on the Right: The "New Right" and the Politics of Resentment, *published in paperback by Pantheon Books.*

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

blacks enrolled in the program would "graduate" from it and become right-thinking Republicans. Chattel slavery was out of the question, they must have figured, which left only welfare, and "that," as the Greater Watergater liked to say, "would be wrong."

But, 8(a) and related programs, if anything, made the participants hot for greater government handouts and an ever larger public sector to do business with. The General Accounting Office found in April 1981 that "most firms view the program as an end in itself," though many "have received all that SBA has to offer and have had ample time to develop."

Charles V. Hamilton, Wallace Sayre Professor of Political Science at Columbia University, found in his studies of the voting patterns of middle-class blacks that on economic issues they are, in fact, "to the left" of almost every other group surveyed, including blacks so poor they couldn't possibly be considered for participation in these government programs. What is significant, Hamilton concludes, is not "that blacks have achieved middle-class status, but the nature of their relationship to the economy." Black businessmen, Hamilton discovered, "very often started through Office of Minority Business Enterprise grants. Many were involved in Great Society programs" and "are deeply tied to the public-sector economy."

Michael Cardenas, former head honcho at the SBA, says the program's real problem is that it's been "mismanaged," presumably by previous Democratic administrations. (Cardenas resigned on February 4, after public charges of his incompetence and conflicts of interest.) But Hamilton's findings suggest that mismanagement isn't so much the problem. If the intent was to breed a new class of independent black businessmen, then the premise itself was wrong. It was based on the false notion that you can create free-market entrepreneurs by addicting them to the public teat and teaching them the sophisticated science of federal grantsmanship.

What the Reagan administration will do with this mess is still undecided, but so far their efforts have not been too impressive. Don't count on them to ditch the entire program though, since its constituency has only been allowed to increase. Nixon's cunning manipulation of American blacks was outdone by Jimmy Carter, who instituted a special program to triple the dollar value of federal contracts with participating minority firms, steering $3.8 billion their way. "No one knows where he got that figure," one official involved in the process recalls. "There was even some speculation that it might have been a typographical error." SBA flack Marian Byers says the Reaganauts have allowed the Carter project to die—"Let's just say that there is 'no emphasis' being put on it today," she explained—though the bureaucracy remains in place and 8(a) is still regarded by the administration as "a valuable part of this nation's efforts to provide opportunities to many who, because of past disadvantage, have not had the chance to succeed as small businesspersons."

All they have done to curb the program, in fact, is to enforce a law passed several months before Reagan took office, limiting participants to five years in the program. This will help, but won't go far enough: The scandals, with the assistance of top SBA officials, continue.

Columnist Donald Lambro reported in late 1981 that a deputy to Cardenas made repeated efforts in September to pressure SBA officials to approve a $505,000 Department of Energy contract to one minority-owned firm then under federal investigation. Despite recommendations by regional and district officials to turn it down, "high-level SBA officials forced its approval." The firm, Solar America of Albuquerque, New Mexico, failed to fulfill program requirements, according to GAO reports. A memo from SBA's district administrator in Albuquerque notes that Solar America is "presently under investigation" by Inspector General Paul Boucher. "The approval of an additional . . . contract would be ill timed and improper management of the 8(a) program." The district administrator was overruled after what SBA investigators themselves consider "unusual" pressure from Washington, leading one source within the agency to say: "The Solar investigation is well known around here, but they approved the contract anyway. The question is, why?"

The answer may lie in the fact that the program invites abuse and undue political involvement. One official who has been with the Office of Minority Business Enterprise from early on finds that participation "has become highly politicized and is often granted on the basis of personal or political connections." It may be no coincidence, then, that when at least two Nixon administration aides, Robert J. Brown and Antonio Rodriquez, left the White House, they too climbed onto the 8(a) gravy train.

The intent to breed a new class of black businessmen was based on the false notion that you can create entrepreneurs by teaching them the sophisticated science of government grantsmanship.

The program cries out for serious scrutiny—the kind the federal government itself seems constitutionally incapable of doing—but don't expect to hear much about it on NBC news.

There the whole subject should spark acute mortification, since the program to aid minority-group members once extended a $345,000 loan guarantee to one of NBC's top newsmen, Tom Brokaw, who is, according to Senator William Proxmire (D-Wis.), "the last person that a government program to help needy business should be subsidizing."

Brokaw, who was then hauling down something like $500,000 a year, wanted to buy a South Dakota radio station and seems to have figured out how to beat the system. He applied for the loan as Tom Tom Communications, which apparently convinced administrators that Brokaw and his partner were wampumless American Indians. At this rate, don't be surprised to see Lee Iacocca making like Al Jolson, crooning "Mammy" and shuffling his way into line. ❑

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

AGENT WHITE

It kills weeds, bushes, trees – and maybe people

by Keith Schneider

CHISELED IN ROCK-HARD GRANITE, THE names and dates on the gravestones in the Grape Creek Baptist Church cemetery tell a story about this rural North Carolina region. Dates on some of the stones attest to the long, spartan lives eked out by many settlers here in Cherokee County: The names of families that have lived for generations in these Snowbird Mountain valleys and coves are represented here: Dockery, Hunsucker, Lovingood, Woods. Some of these gravestones date back many years, but others—too many others—were put in place recently, and the story they tell about Cherokee County, North Carolina, is as stark and forbidding as the rugged Snowbird peaks in winter. It is as if the hillside cemetery at Grape Creek Baptist Church were whispering to the living that something unnatural has been killing the people of Cherokee, and the residents of the county get the message loud and clear. They're running scared, very scared.

"It's like living in the land of the dying," says forty-nine-year-old Helen Dockery, as she sits in the dining room of her one-story home in the Hanging Dog section of Cherokee, three miles from the cemetery. Helen Dockery may have been the first person around who heard the message from the gravestones. She picked it up a year ago, just before she lost both breasts to cancer.

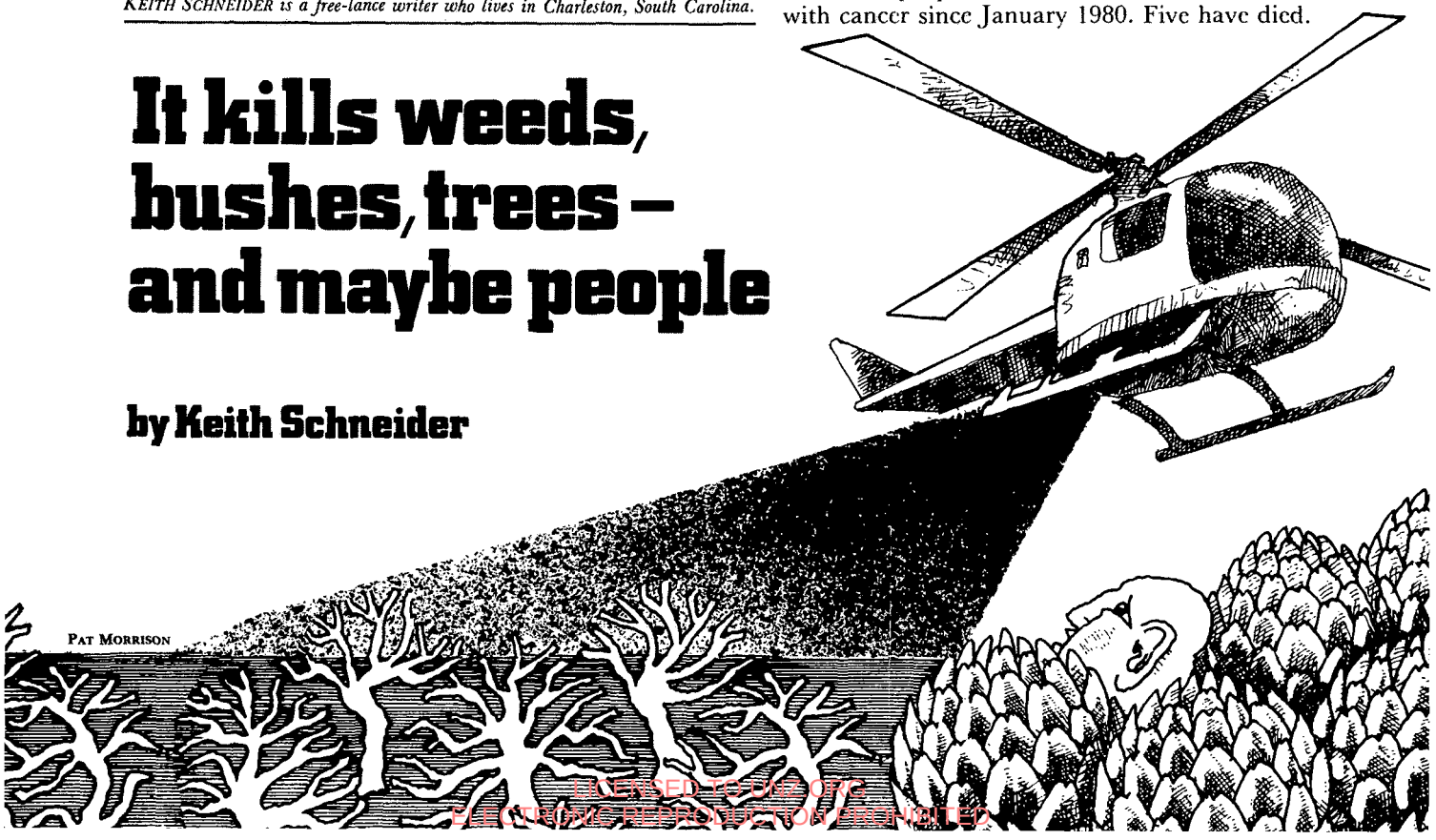
"I could name twenty people who died of cancer here in the last ten years," says Dockery. "It's all over these hills. On the other side of the hill there must be six women with breast cancer. We've got an epidemic here. It's like living in a penitentiary. You wonder if you'll be pardoned for another day or not."

KEITH SCHNEIDER is a free-lance writer who lives in Charleston, South Carolina.

For years, the death rate in Cherokee County was comparable to the rate in other sparsely settled rural areas of the nation. The elderly died of natural causes. Younger persons died in accidents. There were no alarms sounding, no messages to be heard. And year after year, the death toll from cancer was generally well below the national average. In 1960, out of 170 deaths in the county, only twenty-one were related to cancer. In 1976 almost one in seven people who died in Cherokee, died of cancer, a figure below the national average. But by 1979, the situation was radically different. In 1979, nearly one in four people died of cancer countywide—60 percent above the national average and nearly double the state average. And since 1979, say physicians in Cherokee, cancer-related deaths appear to be even more numerous.

In the county's 200-family Hanging Dog section, between January 1980 and January 1982, eighteen people were struck by cancer. The victims were hit by different types of cancer—breast cancer, intestinal cancer, blood cancer, prostate cancer, ovarian cancer, brain-stem cancer. One man was so sick that before he died his neighbors joked grimly that he had cancer in his socks. Six people died during the two-year period, including a twenty-five-year-old man. Three of them were buried in the cemetery beside Grape Creek Baptist Church.

Hanging Dog has not faced the recent onslaught of cancer alone. Across the broad Hiwassee River, fifteen miles east, in the fifty-family Martins Creek section, seven people have developed cancer in the past two years, and three have died. In the southwestern corner of Cherokee, near the Tennessee Valley Authority's massive Hiwassee Dam, seventeen people, from 130 families, have been stricken with cancer since January 1980. Five have died.



PAT MORRISON

LICENSED TO OMB.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

The radical increase in cancer deaths has added a new dimension to the meaning of survival in Cherokee County. At the same time, in the eyes of local residents, a primary suspect in the deaths has been identified. It is an agricultural chemical called picloram, manufactured and sold by Dow Chemical Company, and contained in a line of powerful herbicides marketed under the trade name "Tordon." County residents believe picloram, liberally applied to forest and farmland from one end of Cherokee to the other for as long as anyone can remember, is washing off the land and poisoning the ground-water supplies from which most county residents draw their water. Tordon products are so poisonous that the Environmental Protection Agency, which registers more than 2000 pesticides, classifies Tordon as one of thirty-seven "restricted use" pesticides. Tordon can be lawfully applied only by trained applicators with a special permit. Half a cup will kill a century-old oak in less than a month. Fifteen pounds can keep an acre of pastureland clear of brush and weeds for up to three years.

Since it was first put on the market in 1963, nearly twenty years ago, Tordon has been one of the more popular broadleaf weed and woody-brush killers used nationwide. Literally millions of pounds of Tordon have been poured down America's gullet. To hear industry tycoons and agricultural officials describe it, life in America couldn't exist without Tordon. Railroads use it to keep their roadbeds clear. State transportation departments coast to coast spray it on medians and shoulders instead of mowing. Electric-power companies spray it from helicopters on their power-line rights of way to hold weeds down. The U.S. Forest Service and America's timber companies use Tordon to trim pine stands of uneconomical hardwoods. Farmers spread it on fence lines. The U.S. Army even took it to Vietnam, where it was known as Agent White and sprayed from tanker planes to kill plants that survived the onslaught of Agent Orange. Moreover, since the use of Agent Orange was suspended in 1979, after its being challenged in Oregon as a cause of miscarriages, companies that used Agent Orange as a defoliant and weedkiller have substituted Tordon, further increasing its use.

Tordon is used most heavily in forested rural areas like Cherokee County, where people draw their drinking water from springs and private wells. Instructions on containers of the herbicide specifically state that Tordon should not be used where ground water flows less than ten feet below the surface, or within half a mile of streams used for irrigation or household use. The label says: "Do not allow Tordon to contaminate water used for drinking, irrigation, or other domestic purposes." Federal agencies, however, like the National Forest Service apply Tordon to millions of acres of mountainous, rainy territory—and the rainfall from these areas enters the water supplies for many major cities.

Because Tordon has been used so extensively, many citizens are now concerned about the effects of the herbicide on people. A primary worry is whether or not Tordon, applied indiscriminately to areas across the nation, is poisoning American citizens with the same efficiency with which it kills plants. Not to worry, says Wendell Mullison, a retired Dow researcher retained by the company as a consultant: "Picloram is completely safe for humans. You know, table salt is three times more toxic."

When asked if he would, therefore, take a tablespoon of Tordon, pour it like salt into a glass of water, and drink it, he said: "It's a damn fool thing to do. That's like driving to the edge of a cliff as fast as you can without falling over."

Dow's claims of Tordon's safety—especially the table-salt analogy—have been met with skepticism by environmentalists around the nation. The table-salt analogy, the environmentalists say, has as little basis in fact as the three cancer-research studies on which the EPA has based a favorable opinion of the herbicide.

The first two studies were performed by Industrial Biotest Laboratories of Illinois—at one time the nation's largest chemical-testing firm. Last summer, Dr. Joseph Calandra, the lab's former president, and three of Calandra's assistants were indicted by the federal government for falsifying data, fabricating test results, and substituting fresh test animals when animals died during tests. Industrial Biotest was shut down. But 160 of its research studies concerning pesticides and herbicides now used on a wide array of products were found to be so deficient as to be considered invalid. The Biotest studies on picloram were among that group. (The Biotest picloram studies are now being repeated, says the EPA, by Dow Chemical.)

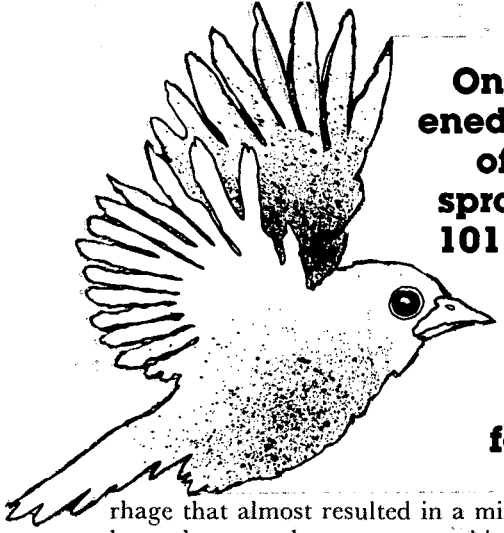
The third picloram research study was conducted by Gulf South Research Institute in New Iberia, Louisiana. In 1977, the same year Gulf South completed a cancer research project on picloram under contract to the National Cancer Institute, the lab was audited by the EPA. Investigators discovered "serious deficiencies" in scientific procedures at Gulf South. Among those deficiencies were "improper feeding techniques," "possible cross-contamination of diets with other substances being tested concurrently in the same room," "improper recording of age of animals at death," "questionable animal identification and record-keeping practices," and "discrepancies between the raw data and final report."

AS IF TO MOCK THE INVALIDATED TEST results at Biotest and Gulf South, picloram has recently emerged as a prime suspect in a host of serious health disorders from Massachusetts to Oregon:

■ In Augusta, Georgia, nine members of three families along Turner Drive have sued Dow and the Georgia Power Company, charging that applications of Tordon 10-K pellets, used to clear a power-line right of way abutting their property, leached picloram into their wells between 1976 and 1979. (Tordon 10-K is composed of 10 percent picloram and 90 percent inert ingredients.) The medical difficulties of the three families have been severe since the application of the pellets, they charge. Fred Turner's left kidney developed a cancerous tumor and was removed in December 1979. One woman underwent an emergency hysterectomy because of severe bleeding, and her niece suffered dangerous gynecological problems. Two other women claim they suffer from chronic kidney and bladder problems. Several members of the family complain of severe skin irritation.

■ In Weymouth, Massachusetts, near Boston, workmen under contract to Boston Edison Company sprayed a fine mist of Tordon 101 on a Boston Ed right of way. (Tordon 101 is 10 percent picloram, 40 percent 2,4-D, another herbicide under attack by environmentalists, and 50 percent inert ingredients.) Several townhouse complexes and single-family homes were located nearby. According to an investigation by the environmental group Greenpeace, dozens of people complained within hours of the spraying of nausea, appetite loss, sore throats, and respiratory problems. One woman suffered a miscarriage five days after the spraying. A second woman suffered an internal hemor-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED



One man awakened to the sound of a helicopter spraying Tordon 101 on his house and garden, and the spring from which his family drank.

rhage that almost resulted in a miscarriage. Five months later the second woman gave birth to a child who has endured chronic respiratory difficulties since birth. Three weeks later a third woman gave birth to a child with similar respiratory problems. Greenpeace found surprisingly high rates of skin cancer in the area. In response to the Greenpeace probe, Robert Little, a Boston Ed official, denied any connection between the sprayings and the health problems. "I don't think there is any problem at all," Little said. "If you wanted, you could probably find coincidences of this nature wherever you wanted to."

■ In Cusseta, Alabama, near Auburn and Opelika, Mark Alley was awakened on the morning of June 14, 1980, by the sound of a helicopter that was spraying Tordon 101 on his house, yard, garden, and the spring from which his family drew its drinking and household water. (The helicopter was trying to spray an Alabama Power Company right of way that crossed Alley's property.) By nightfall, nausea, coughing, and watering of the eyes forced Alley's family to evacuate from their $150,000 home. They still haven't returned.

Alley has filed suit against, among others, Alabama Power, Dow Chemical, and Evergreen Helicopter. Alley hired Dr. Jesse Bidanset, one of the country's leading forensic toxicologists, to investigate the levels of picloram remaining after the spraying. Fourteen months after the spraying took place, Bidanset advised the Alley family to remain away from their home. Although Bidanset's complete report will not be released until after its presentation in court, he did indicate that it could take twenty years or more for the picloram to leach out of the soil. (EPA officials claim that Tordon's life span is much shorter. They say that in cold, dry climates, it biodegrades within four and a half months to four years after application, and in warm, wet climates, within one and a half months to eleven months.)

The Alley family has decided that regardless of the outcome of their suit, they can never return to the home they built themselves. But while they cannot return, their suit may, at the least, have beneficial consequences for other Alabama land and homeowners. The Alley attorneys may be seeking an injunction to halt the use of picloram in the state of Alabama.

One of picloram's most persistent investigators has been Dr. Ruth Shearer, a molecular geneticist and former program director for cancer research at the Issaquah (Washington) Health Research Center. She has been studying the low-level toxic effects of picloram poisoning for the past twenty months as a private consultant. Among her research findings:

■ In Page, West Virginia, Shearer found a thirty-five-year-old woman whose Christmas-tree farm had been doused with a mixture of picloram and Krenite, another herbicide. The chemicals were sprayed by a helicopter that was poisoning power-line rights of way near her farm. The woman was standing on her property when the helicopter passed overhead. Within forty-five minutes her skin started to burn, her eyes watered, and she developed a hacking cough that became chronic. In the weeks that followed, the woman's symptoms worsened. In medical tests she was found to have a swollen thyroid. Her joints were swollen and stiff. She sued the Appalachian Power Company, and her case is pending.

■ Near Butte, Montana, as part of Montana's taxpayer-supported program for weed control, a forty-five-year-old man was applying Tordon 101 to weeds along the road in front of his ranch house. The State of Montana sold the herbicide to the man, but failed to notify him of its "restricted use" classification or the dangers associated with applying Tordon. Without protective gear, the man sprayed an area adjacent to his home. Friends rushed him to a hospital in Butte when he complained of headache, nausea, and dizziness. Doctors were unable to diagnose his condition. Later, the man's joints swelled. Boil-like lumps appeared on his skin. His muscles twitched and ached.

■ In Tellico Plains, Tennessee, just sixty miles west of Cherokee County, Dr. Shearer interviewed members of the Ernest West family. The Wests had sued Dow and the U.S. Forest Service for $14 million, charging that a Forest Service timber crew, armed with Tordon 101, used the herbicide on a clear-cut area above his house during the summer of 1978. West's home stands at the foot of a broad shoulder that is part of the Cherokee National Forest. West maintains that Tordon was carried off the mountain slopes by heavy rains and poisoned the family spring. West and ten other members of his family now suffer from an assortment of disabling health problems, says his attorney, Ward Whelchel of Knoxville. West's eight-year-old granddaughter experienced convulsions, tremors in her hands and legs, and disturbing personality changes not long after the Forest Service crew arrived on West's property to mix their chemicals near the spring. Dow and the Forest Service investigated the complaint and vigorously deny any responsibility for the family's health problems. Says U.S. Department of Agriculture attorney Judith Curry, who is handling the case for the Forest Service: "We are quite sure their problems did not result from our applications of Tordon 101 in that area."

Ruth Shearer, however, isn't nearly as certain. "What I'm seeing with picloram poisonings are patterns of chronic symptoms—headaches, problems with vision, weakness and fatigue, skin ailments, enlarged livers, respiratory difficulties, extensive kidney damage. I know Dow says picloram is three times less toxic than salt. But salt doesn't cause damage like this, and it doesn't cause cancer.

"The more you get inside this thing the more you see it stinks," continues Shearer. "The EPA says it's safe basing their assumption on a group of nonsense reports. They ignore these cases around the country. They allow the company to conduct its own research. All I know is that picloram is very dangerous stuff." Cherokee County residents agree. "They found cancer in my breast in August 1980," explains forty-three-year-old Anne Ledford, who lives in the Martins Creek section. "I have no family history [of cancer]. I went back to the hospital last fall, and they

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

found it in my liver. I can name three who died of it last year. Where does it come from? The water? The water should be pure coming from the mountain, shouldn't it?"

IT SHOULD. BUT IT PROBABLY ISN'T. THERE is hardly a square foot of Cherokee County where a stream is more than half a mile away or where ground water is more than ten feet below the surface. Cherokee's mountains attract storm clouds that can dump up to eighty inches of rain a year on its rawhide back. Yet each year Cherokee also receives haphazard and ill-conceived Tordon drenching.

More than 93,000 acres of Cherokee County belong to the Forest Service as part of the 515,000-acre Nantahala National Forest. Each year Forest Service crews use a quarter ton of Tordon on roughly 800 acres of clear-cut forest to remove hardwoods. Robert Wilson, a timber management staff member who supervises the program for 1.2 million acres of National Forest land in North Carolina, says Tordon is used safely and poses no threat to the people of Cherokee or any other county. "It's registered by the EPA," he says. But what about the label instructions? What about the case of Ernest West in Tellico Plains? What about people dying? "Hey, wait a minute," he protests. "I'm not that familiar with the chemistry of these things. I'm a timberman."

Cherokee doesn't weather the Forest Service assault alone. Each year the Forest Service wages chemical war on such things as tip moths and aquatic weeds and stubborn brush. In 1980, according to a Forest Service report prepared for Congress titled *Pesticide Use on National Forest System Lands for Fiscal 1980,* 372,000 pounds of herbicides were spread across 444,000 acres of National Forest lands from sea to shining sea.

Picloram is one of the service's favorite weapons. Crews use almost 49,000 pounds of picloram on 77,000 acres of National Forest every year.

Then there's the Tennessee Valley Authority, the federal government's monstrous electric-power company, which operates in seven southern states and has thousands of miles of power-line rights of way to keep clear. The TVA annually uses roughly 43,000 pounds of picloram, sprayed from helicopters to clear 160 miles of transmission lines and 1000 acres of timberland. One of the more favorable dividends of picloram, according to its users, is its persistence. Once sprayed on an area it will kill effectively for up to three years. Every three years for the last decade and a half, a squadron of TVA helicopters has descended on Cherokee County to soak power-line trails.

As if that's not enough to worry the locals, two years ago the federal Appalachian Regional Commission in conjunction with the North Carolina State Department of Agriculture jointly sponsored a $270,000 weed-eradication project for North Carolina's western counties. In an example of bureaucratic shortsightedness bulging with ironies, the ARC-NCDA plan was designed to eradicate a bush called the multiflora rose. More than thirty years ago, the multiflora rose was introduced into North Carolina's Appalachian counties by the same state and federal governments to provide erosion control and give farmers a chance to grow natural fences.

The plan backfired after indifferent birds spread rose seeds up and down North Carolina's mountainous spine, and the rose did what hardy plants normally do: It thrived. Creative government officials then put their heads together and decided to control multiflora rose with Tordon 10-K pellets. What's more, 60 percent of the cost of the herbicide would be subsidized by state and federal funds.

Hank Fonda, an organic farmer, carpenter, and Cherokee County environmentalist, along with his friend, freelance outdoors writer Gil Hargett, found out about the program and confronted county leaders with what they knew about the dangers associated with picloram.

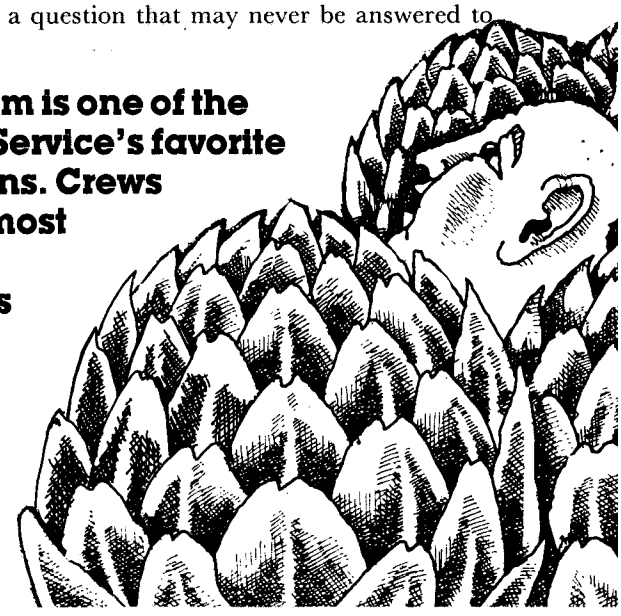
The county commissioners listened to their concerns and ordered local, state, and federal agricultural agents to provide evidence of picloram's safety. Within a week, Bass Hyatt, the Agricultural Stabilization and Conservation Service representative, and Jack Earley, the county's agricultural extension chairman, introduced as evidence the Gulf South Research Institute study, the Industrial Biotest Laboratories studies, and letters of assurance from A. D. Worsham, professor of weed science at North Carolina State, who cited EPA evidence that picloram had been "given a clean bill of health."

With that, county officials okayed the program. "The whole thing really pissed me off," says Hargett. "Any farmer around here will tell you the best way to control multiflora rose is to take care of your land. You let your land go and the rose will go with it. They only had forty farmers show up for the stuff. There must be 400 farmers in this county. There's no way they could have killed all the multiflora rose in the county if they'd dumped 25,000 tons of picloram here. The only point of that program was to spend money and make two bureaucrats feel like they did something good."

Despite repeated requests by residents of Cherokee County that ground-water tests be conducted by the governmental agencies responsible for distributing and spraying picloram across the county, no such tests have been conducted. But, after years of intensive use across Cherokee County, it would be unusual if picloram were not present in the water supplies used by residents for both domestic and agricultural purposes. And while residents continue to request water tests for picloram, they are not surprised when their requests go ignored. After all, fish kills in Cherokee County regularly go uninvestigated by the agencies responsible for maintaining the rivers and streams.

The sharp rise in cancer-related deaths in Cherokee County raises a question that may never be answered to

Picloram is one of the Forest Service's favorite weapons. Crews use almost 49,000 pounds of it on 77,000 acres annually.



LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

anyone's satisfaction: Is there one agent responsible for these incidents of cancer?

Any attempt to isolate and identify one single cause of cancer automatically confronts a host of scientific and medical stumbling blocks. The number of factors that would have to be introduced into such a study would generate a comparable number of opinions and answers.

But while it would be hard, if not impossible, to prove

The people of Cherokee were never warned by their government or its agencies of the possible long-term effects of picloram spraying.

that any particular person in one community in Cherokee County developed cancer because of exposure to picloram, the possibility that picloram is a cancer-causing agent in Cherokee County cannot be discounted. The lifestyle of Cherokee County's residents has remained virtually unchanged for generations, and it was only after the introduction of picloram into their remote and isolated region that a number of them developed cancer.

The sharp rise in cancer-related deaths focused attention on the use of picloram. But more importantly, it brought into question the unrestricted use by the federal government and its agencies of herbicides that may be dangerous to citizens. The people of Cherokee were never warned by their government or its agencies of possible long-term consequences of picloram spraying. And they were never offered the chance to say, "Don't spray." Despite the local tragedy in Cherokee, a larger tragedy threatens citizens everywhere when the government releases potentially harmful substances and its citizens are not allowed a voice in the matter.

The victims in such situations are individual citizens like the Dockerys in Cherokee County. But the winners are those entities within the vast governmental complex that benefit financially from picloram-like contracts. Dow Chemical and its representatives speak boldly of Dow's moral commitment to insure the safety of each of its agricultural products, like picloram. Their voices dwindle to a soft "no comment," though, when asked how much Tordon they sell each year, and to whom. One thing, however, is clear: Governmental entities buy a huge amount of the stuff, because they control huge tracts of land. Stop government use of Tordon and you cut the heart out of the problem.

Picloram entered the American marketplace in 1963 and became one of the four major products sold by Dow's agricultural-chemicals division. Though not the company's largest section, the agricultural-chemicals division is among its most profitable, the beneficiary of a post–World War II theory in American land management: If there's a problem, any problem, hit it with a chemical.

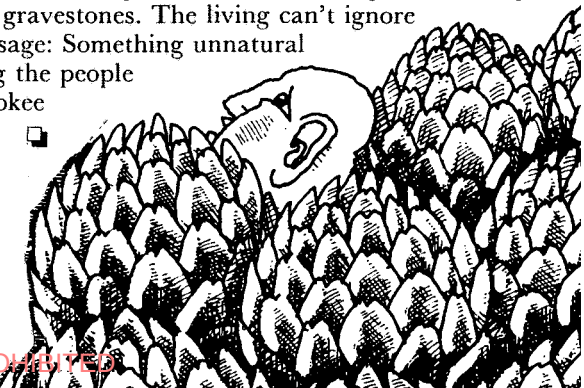
In 1978, agricultural chemicals earned Dow $398 million. Last year's sales are estimated to have exceeded $550 million, helping to solidify Dow's ranking as twenty-fifth in the annual Fortune 500 list of America's largest corporations. Corporate officials resolutely refuse to discuss Tordon sales figures—"I don't see what that has to do with anything," said Dow spokesman Robert W. Charlton—but the federal government alone buys between $500,000 and $1 million worth of the herbicide each year. At $2.50 a pound for Tordon 10-K and $3.50 a pound for Tordon 101, that's a lot of herbicide being spread around the country.

UNTIL HE WAS FORCED TO RESIGN FROM the National Cancer Institute's Frederick (Maryland) Cancer Research Center in March 1981, Dr. Melvin D. Reuber's primary objective was to criticize chemicals like picloram. For ten years, Reuber was regarded as one of the nation's best pathologists working with carcinogenic chemicals entering the environment. Between 1973 and 1978 Reuber was the EPA's primary expert witness in hearings to ban five carcinogenic chemicals from the marketplace. "There's no other way to do a responsible job," says Reuber, "except to say and publish the truth."

A year ago, after Reuber spoke out publicly against the use of malathion in California to kill hordes of Mediterranean fruit flies, because the chemical is carcinogenic, Dr. M. G. Hanna, Jr., the director of the Frederick center, decided Reuber had spoken one truth too many. In a scathing letter of reprimand, Hanna accused Reuber of "creating controversies that have both scientific and economic impact." Hanna even went so far as to charge Reuber with "carelessness and lack of professional expertise." Reuber says the real reason for his dismissal was chemical-industry pressure.

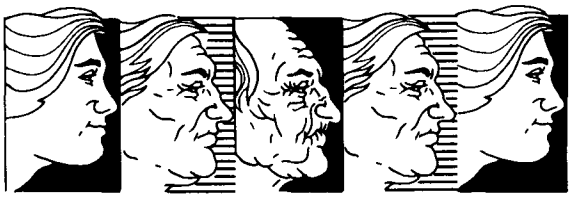
Reuber's friction with the EPA and the National Cancer Institute began in 1979 when he wrote a paper called "Carcinogenicity of Picloram," published last year in the *Journal of Toxicology and Environmental Health*. In his research, Reuber reviewed hundreds of tissue slides prepared by the Gulf South Research Institute for their study under contract to the NCI. Reuber also reviewed studies by Dow. Where Gulf South researchers and Dow researchers saw no malignancies, Reuber saw malignancy after malignancy, cancers that spread throughout the bodies of rats fed large and small doses of picloram. Female rats suffered malignancies of the reproductive organs and breasts. Male rats died with cancer of the pituitary gland, and many developed chronic kidney disease. Reuber's conclusion: "In tests undertaken to date, it has been demonstrated that virtually every chemical which has been found to be carcinogenic in man is also carcinogenic in one or more mammalian test animals." He stands by that conclusion today. "It doesn't surprise me that high rates of cancer are being found in Cherokee County," he says. "If the rat studies are any indication, picloram is terribly dangerous. It's highly likely Tordon is a cause for what's happening."

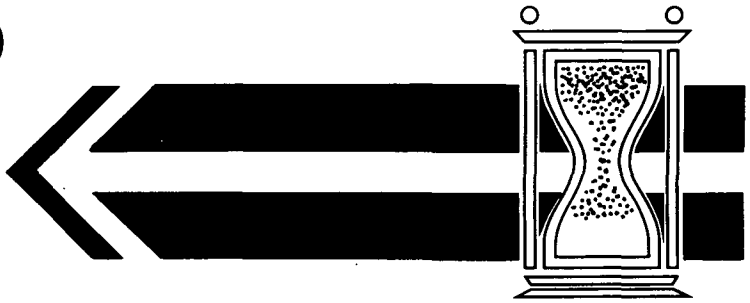
Will Cherokee officials heed Reuber's warning? Will the EPA suspend picloram's use pending a full investigation of its health effects? How many more people will die? Maybe the answers rest up there with the Grape Creek Baptist Church gravestones. The living can't ignore the message: Something unnatural is killing the people of Cherokee County. ❑

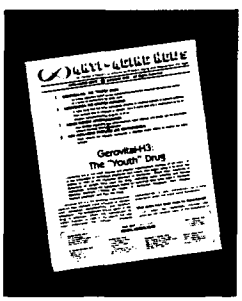


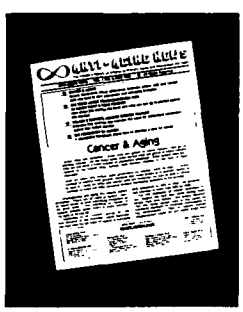
LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

AGING CAN BE PREVENTED EVEN REVERSED









Who says so? Some of the leading scientists in the country, that's who. They're developing revolutionary anti-aging therapies that could extend **your** lifespan dramatically.

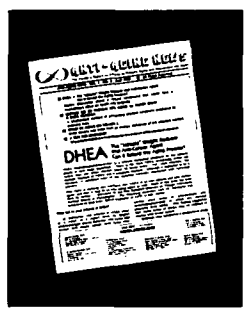
You can read about these therapies in ANTI-AGING NEWS — the insider's report on efforts to prevent aging and rejuvenate the aged. ANTI-AGING NEWS brings you exclusive information about scientific breakthroughs that could enable you to live in good health for 200 years . . . or even longer.

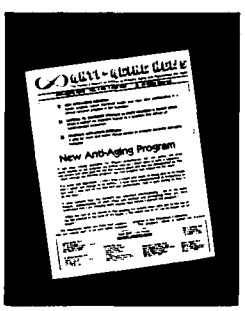
Among the many feature stories presented in ANTI-AGING NEWS are the *following:*

- **Gerovital-H3** — An objective report on the world-famous Romanian "youth" drug, including information about how to obtain it.
- **DHEA** — Is it the wonder drug of the 80s? — A "miracle" weight reducer that may prevent cancer and keep you youthful.
- **Cancer & Aging** — A remarkable biological breakthrough that could lead to a cure for cancer **and** a method of retarding the aging process.
- **Memory-Boosting Therapies** — How you can improve your memory and intelligence by taking drugs and vitamins.
- **Preventing Environmental Damage** — How nutritional antioxidants can protect you from harmful chemicals in the air, water, and food.
- **The New Aphrodisiacs** — Therapies that stimulate sexual appetite and improve sexual performance.
- **The Search For The "Death" Hormone** — A hormone produced by the pituitary gland that may cause you to grow old and die.
- **The Longevity Diet** — An exclusive report on a new method of controlling food intake in order to maximize your lifespan potential.
- **How Body Temperature Affects Lifespan** — Slight variations in your body temperature could be a key factor in determining how long you live.
- **Placenta Therapy in the Soviet Union** — A visit to a rejuvenation clinic in the Ukraine, where extracts of human placenta are used to treat aging.

ANTI-AGING NEWS also features a column by Durk Pearson & Sandy Shaw. In his many appearances on national TV, Pearson has astounded viewers with his incredible scientific knowledge. Now you can read about his (and partner Sandy Shaw's) findings on health, nutrition, and longevity in ANTI-AGING NEWS.

The subscription rate for ANTI-AGING NEWS is $27/year for 12 monthly 8-page issues. As a special bonus for subscribing now, you'll receive reprints of 5 of Durk Pearson & Sandy Shaw's recent columns.





Durk Pearson

Scientific Advisory Board

Joseph Meites, Ph.D.
Prof. of Physiology
Dir., Neuroendocrine Research Laboratory
Michigan State University
East Lansing, Mi. 48824

Raymond T. Bartus, Ph.D.
Senior Scientist & Group Leader
Dept. of Central Nervous System Research
Medical Research Division
American Cyanamid Company
Pearl River, N.Y. 10965

W. Donner Denckla, M.D.
Research Scientist
National Institute of Alcohol Abuse
& Alcoholism
Rockville, Md. 20852

Paul E. Segall, Ph.D.
Research Scientist
Dept. of Physiology/Anatomy
Univ. of California/Berkeley
Berkeley, Ca. 94720

Roy L. Walford, M.D.
Prof. of Pathology
UCLA Medical Center
Los Angeles, Ca. 90024

Stanley Fink, Ph.D.
Dir. of Biomedical Research
Thoracel Company
Costa Mesa, Ca. 92626
Formerly:
Dir., Physiological Performance
Laboratory, Johnson Space Center,
NASA, Houston, Texas

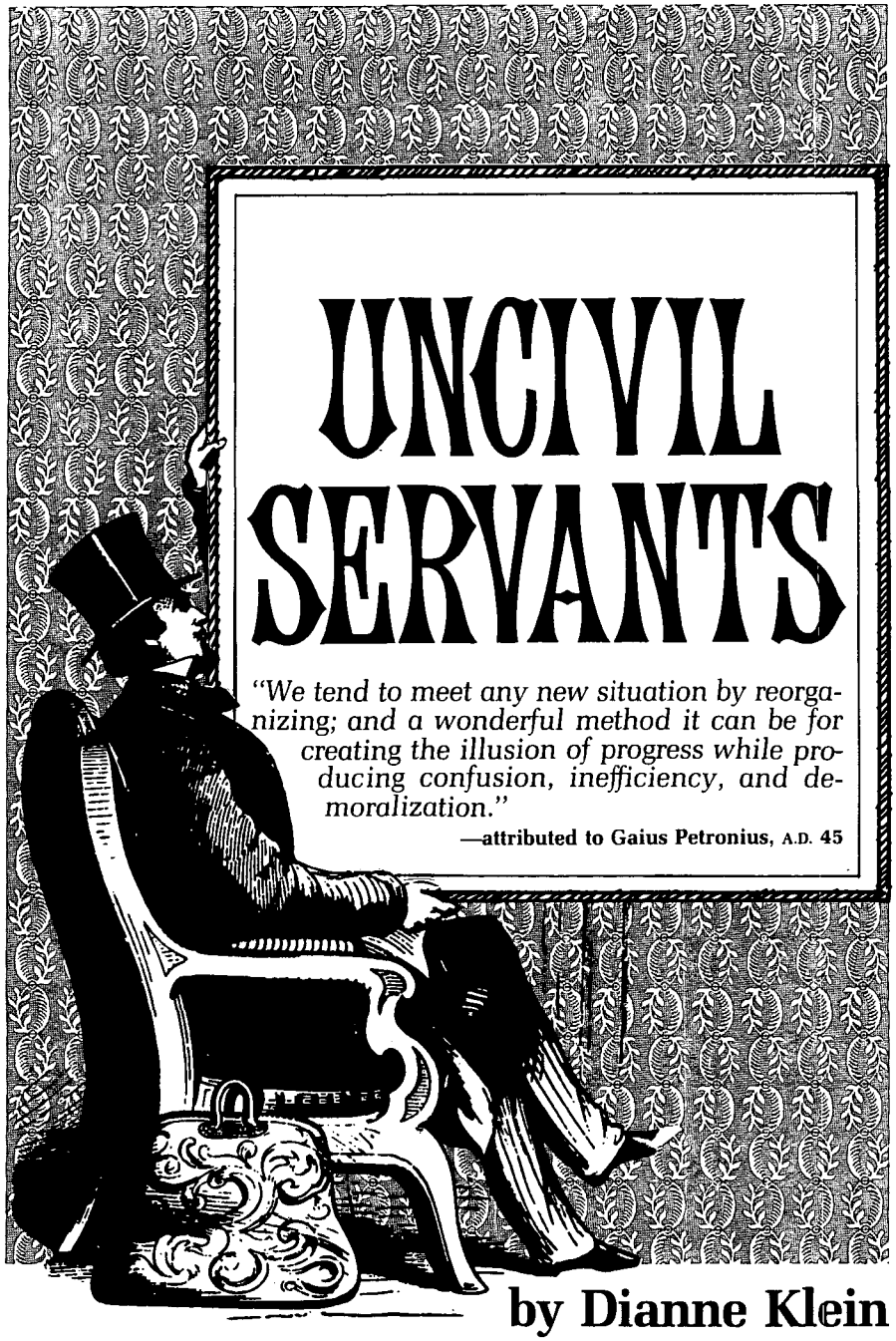
INQUIRY MAGAZINE
1320 G Street, S.E. • Washington, D.C. 20003

Enclosed is $_____ for _____ one-year subscriptions to ANTI-AGING NEWS at $27/year.
Make check or money order payable to INQUIRY MAGAZINE.

Name _____ Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED



UNCIVIL SERVANTS

"We tend to meet any new situation by reorganizing; and a wonderful method it can be for creating the illusion of progress while producing confusion, inefficiency, and demoralization."

—attributed to Gaius Petronius, A.D. 45

by Dianne Klein

SO MAYBE THINGS WERE a little slow that day at the Herbert Hoover Library in West Branch, Iowa. Sure couldn't have been much slower for guard Joseph Ruzek. Ol' Joe was in dreamland—again. Oh sure, he'd been warned about sleeping on the job before. Hell, a year earlier the boss even suspended him for six days, one of the two "disciplinary actions" staining his seventeen-year employment record with the federal government. Just five months before that, he'd been suspended for five days. Misuse of sick leave, they called it. One time, after Joe called to say he wasn't quite up to coming into work, he was spotted in a cocktail lounge during his regular working shift. It seemed Joe Ruzek, an alcoholic, spent a lot of time in cocktail lounges.

So what does the federal government do with a drunkard guard who can't keep his eyes open on the job? That depends. Joe's supervisor at the General Services Administration told Ruzek the agency would be willing to help him with any "problems" he might have. That offer, however, was made before he awakened Joe, reeking of alcohol, the second time. That's when Joe got his thirty days' notice, and that's when Joe wised up.

Alcoholism? Sure, he admitted that. But forget about the booze and forget about any "alleged" inability to do the job. That's obviously beside the point. The real issue—can't you see?—is discrimination. Ol' Joe is handicapped.

No, he isn't blind, deaf, or confined to a wheelchair. After all, how could the federal government hire a blind man to guard a library? Really! Yet because he's a genuine alcoholic, Ruzek's guardian angel is the Rehabilitation Act of 1973. That, at least, is the interpretation of the Grand Wizard of civil service, the Merit Systems Protection Board, in its August 20, 1981, ruling on *Joseph J. Ruzek* v. *General Services Administration.*

Joe Ruzek, nobody's fool, caught on fast. The Merit Systems Protection Board members in Washington, noting that firing an alcoholic establishes "a prima facie case of handicap discrimination," righted the wrongs brought on poor Joe by his GSA supervisors and the board field office in St. Louis, and gave him his job back. Those who fired him were apparently unaware that the rehabilitation act "does not expressly exclude" alcoholics and drug addicts from the definition of "handicapped individuals." That's what the board said, and its decision carries the same weight as one from a federal district court. For Joe, that is. Were he unhappy about having his job back, he could have petitioned the court of appeals. He can still file with the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission for further relief. The agency, in this case the GSA, is never granted that right.

So there, in the words of the board's press office, is the "precedent-setting decision on the accommodation of federal employees handicapped by alcoholism."

Maybe that wouldn't have been such news a few years ago when the old U.S. Civil Service Commission was still at the reins. Such decisions rarely raised an eyebrow in those days. But this is 1982, and the Civil Service Reform Act has been law for over three years.

Oh no. Please don't tell me you missed it. Why, "reforming" the civil service was Jimmy Carter's bravest promise! The Civil Service Reform Act—an outlandish contradiction in terms, ranking right up there with "military intelligence"—was signed by Carter on October 13, 1978. He called it the "most sweeping reform of

DIANNE KLEIN writes for United Press International in Washington, D.C.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

the civil service since it was created nearly 100 years ago." What's more, the act came only two months after another forgettable milestone: Carter's reorganization plan, which established the Merit Systems Protection Board, its eleven field offices, and the Office of Personnel Management, to replace the Civil Service Commission. And with the hearty support of the largest federal union, the American Federation of Government Employees, the Carter plan also provided for a Federal Labor Relations Authority, the equivalent for government workers of the National Labor Relations Board.

The civil service, so the official line went, had been streamlined, stripped of all those silly, senseless regulations that rewarded incompetence. The act, Carter said, was the "centerpiece" of his plan to make government more efficient and flexible.

More than three years later, with Jimmy, Rosalynn, and Amy safely tucked away in Plains and the Reaganites entrenched in Washington, the only notable changes in civil service have been for the worse. To the amazement of almost nobody, the "sweeping reform" is fast proving itself a whitewash.

"Merit pay"—which was supposed to make civil service emulate private business—is still a thing of the future. It's still practically impossible to fire a federal worker. Bureaucrats still retire early with fat pensions—or worse, stick around to figure new ways to loot the federal treasury. The president and Congress are still pondering what to do. And, of course, you and I are still paying for all of it.

THE CIVIL SERVICE, NOW almost ninety-nine years old, has been under the looking glass numerous times, especially since 1949 when the first Hoover Commission recommended a thorough overhaul. Carter perhaps fought harder than most; but his efforts were still mostly fancy footwork and verbal jabs.

Ronald Reagan, another rhetorical hard-liner, has added his drop to the bucket by halving cost-of-living increases for federal retirees. He had also ordered Reductions in Force (RIFs, in bureaucratic shorthand) at a few blackballed agencies. But that's like trimming the patient's whiskers when he really needs gastric-bypass surgery. RIFing also costs so much—in severance pay, early retirement, and the demotion of employees without reducing salaries—that agencies all over Washington are planning to furlough bureaucrats instead of fire them. (A furlough is unpaid leave, but the workers still enjoy their perquisites.) The Bureau of Engraving and Printing closed down completely from Christmas Eve through January 4, and, you guessed it, nobody noticed.

So far only one Reagan administration suggestion, to set federal pay scales at 94 percent of average nonfederal rates, is new. A handful of Reagan proposals to tinker with civil-service pay formulas strongly resembles a Carter "reform" package that Congress unceremoniously harpooned; there is no sign they will fare any better this time around. That's typical: Congress has never been willing to take on the civil service, but it also guts anything the executive branch sends over.

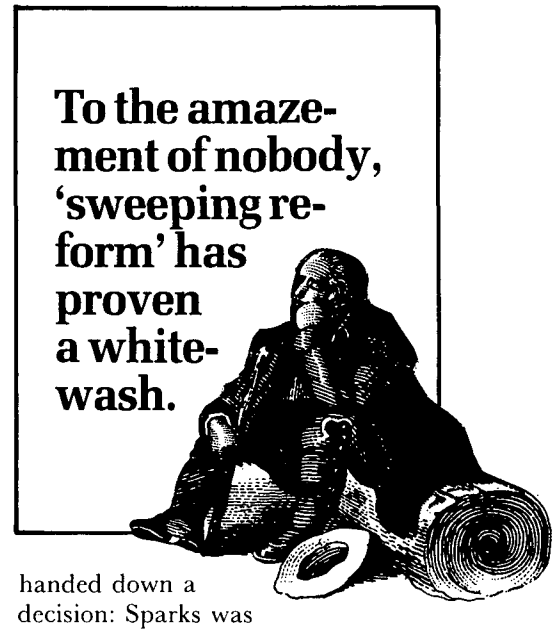
The White House views this philosophically. "It's the nature of a democratic government," one high-placed Reagan official says. "It's like the bear who plays checkers. You could say, 'He sure doesn't play well,' or 'Isn't it remarkable that he can play at all.'"

In a way it's not surprising that Congress chooses to deal with more glamorous issues. The fact is that civil service is immune to reform. The system is shackled with so many rules that common sense is often not considered a policy option. The so-called reforms, themselves shrouded in opaque layers of bureaucratese, usually make matters worse.

One of the 1978 reform's much touted features was to have allowed managers to oust employees who "cannot or will not perform." But the result of a heated House-Senate conference on the bill was a surfeit of fuzzy jargon that virtually guarantees that no civil servant will ever be fired unless a court says it's okay. Says one upper-echelon administration official who must interpret the tangled thicket of "reformed" personnel rules: "One of the great scandals of the system is it's so goddamned difficult to fire marginal employees. If he punches you in the nose, that's easy. If he's doing a lousy job, it's very, very hard."

An example: John Sparks, a civilian pipe-fitter at the Norfolk (Virginia) Naval Shipyard, was working the graveyard shift in late 1979, assigned to guard the passageway to a radiation area aboard the USS *Bergall*. According to testimony at his arbitration hearing, two of Sparks's supervisors found him at 2 A.M. "wearing a baseball cap and dark glasses . . . leaning back in his chair with his head down." Sparks had not been radioactivated—he was asleep on duty. They suspended him for two days.

The pipe fitter, outraged, filed a formal grievance under his union contract. A year later, at the taxpayers' expense, an outside arbitrator finally handed down a decision: Sparks was right. Under his union contract, only a letter of reprimand was in order, not a two-day suspension.



In all fairness, neither Congress nor the executive branch can take sole credit for such routine fiascoes. The judiciary has added to the confusion. Early in the planning process for the Civil Service Reform Act, a few Carter idealists suggested an alternative to the byzantine structure of hearings, notices, and appeals guaranteed disgruntled civil servants: Employees could be fired with the concurrence of three supervisors. The employee would have only a limited right of appeal "for substantial procedural error." This idea, although rich in common-sense appeal, had a fatal flaw apparent to any law student, its unconstitutionality. A federal employee, thanks to the Supreme Court's interpretation of the Constitution's due-process clause, cannot be legally deprived of his "property interest" in a job. In a 1974 decision in *Arnett* v. *Kennedy*, the divided court extended a right it decreed in 1972 to "due process," regardless of the reason for discharge.

So if a bureaucrat is caught taking a

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

bribe (as happened a few years ago at the Internal Revenue Service), is chronically late, or just plain refuses to work, he has the constitutional right to legally contest his firing. (The IRS employee, incidentally, was reinstated by the Civil Service Commission despite having pocketed $50,000.) *Arnett* v. *Kennedy* has made it impossible for anyone, Congress or president, to substantially ease the rules for firing civil-service workers.

Rather than meticulously record every surly comment, spelling error,

Firing a bureaucrat nearly always signals a war.

and lost file for the inevitable grievance procedures, countless government managers hold back and work around incompetent subordinates. One legal secretary in the Department of Energy, who after years in government still cannot take dictation, is routinely foisted off on the new guy in the office. Others regularly drop all else to tune into "General Hospital" and "All My Children" on the transistor radios they stash in their desks. A security guard at the General Printing Office is currently fighting his supervisor's attempt to fire him for watching television at his desk.

At the Department of Labor, no one would even have *tried* to fire that guard. The department's contract with the American Federation of Government Employees guarantees employees "the right to play radios, cassettes, etc., on the worksite." About three out of every five federal employees are covered by union contracts, giving them the option of taking their complaints to their shop stewards or directly to the Merit Systems Protection Board, whichever offers the best chance of relief. Because federal unions cannot negotiate wages or hours and are legally prohibited from striking, bargaining units fight tooth and nail over such monumental issues as employee parking, paternity leave, and the right to sleep on the job.

A supervisor who wants to brave all this and sack an employee must give him a month's notice. Then it can still take over a year before the board makes a final ruling, a year of paperwork, testimony, and aggravation—all on government time. And that's an optimistic scenario. The board, which has declined to consolidate over 11,000 appeals from fired air traffic controllers, is inundated with cases brought by aggrieved bureaucrats. This year the board estimates its caseload at over 20,000.

"It's a travesty," says spokesman Lon Anderson. Unless Congress grants the board more money, he says, "We could be heading back to the days when the old Civil Service Commission, which we replaced, had case backlogs of from two to four years."

*COMPARISONS WITH PRI-*vate industry are, of course, all but meaningless. No private employer in his right mind would put up with half of what goes on in the federal bureaucracy. Whereas outside of government, dismissing an employee for his inability to do the job is, at worst, an unpleasant task, firing a bureaucrat nearly always signals war. As one manager in the Office of Management and Budget found out, even victory may not be worth it.

The manager, training a class of GS 13s for new duties at OMB, repeatedly warned one of his charges that he wasn't up to standard. When the trainee did nothing to improve his performance, the manager, a real straight-arrow, mentioned to his colleagues that he was considering withholding an ingrade increase of $250 a year from the upstart. (Ingrade increases—there are ten between each General Service grade—are routinely given employees just for staying on the payroll.) The old hands at OMB advised their colleague to let it go; they'd heard it all before. But the manager, goaded on by the trainee's arrogance and incompetence, persisted. The hard-fought "victory," after nearly a year of hearings and countless hours of testimony, left the trainee minus $250 of the taxpayers' money and the office staff bitter and divided. Had he to do it over, the manager would have taken his colleagues' advice not to buck the system.

Trying to tell whether more bureaucrats have been fired since the 1978 reform is useless; the Office of Personnel Management insists that figures can't be compared from year to year because of differing statistical collection methods, blah, blah, blah. But an OPM spokesman admits that if you *could* compare, "you won't necessarily see a change" in the number fired for incompetence or misconduct. "There is reason to believe," he says blandly, that employees "will improve their performance." You bet. Under a new evaluation system created by the Civil Service Reform Act, fifty middle-level managers at the Department of Labor were recently rated "outstanding" compared to only two when the old grading system was used.

Wielding the stick—firings—has proven all but impossible on this donkey. And so has dangling a carrot, in this case "merit pay." The merit-pay concept, borrowed from profit-motivated private industry, is simple: give federal managers a raise when the quality of their work merits it. Instead of being automatically rewarded for longevity, middle-level managers, professionals, and supervisors—GS grades 13 through 15—would have been granted only half their scheduled yearly cost-of-living raise. Each agency would reserve the remaining unpaid half of the raise in a pool to be awarded to the best and brightest GS 13s, 14s, and 15s in their departments. The managers, so the theory goes, will strive to improve because the amount of their merit pay will "vary to recognize distinctions in performance."

These bureaucrats earn annual salaries ranging from $34,000 to $57,500; the Merit Systems Protection Board says they are the "crucial linchpin" between top management and the rank and file, the "pool from which the majority of future executives will be drawn." What better group to test the theory that a little competition, backed by economic incentives, can even stimulate the creative juices of a bureaucrat?

What the merit-pay test showed was that bureaucrats, like amoebas, are virtually immune to changes in their environment. Various studies of the experiment so dismayed the government that the Office of Personnel Management was forced to indefinitely postpone the merit-pay program less than a month before it was to have affected nearly all government managers last October 1. What the studies showed was that most of the bureaucrats simply didn't believe their supervisors would judge them fairly—and

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

of the employees who tried merit pay, fully half said it had no effect on their performance or actually discouraged improved performance.

Maybe it's just as well. It turns out that merit pay would have cost the government from $58 million to $78 million *more* each year than the old system. It seems that the Office of Personnel Management had found a clever way to increase the merit pay-hike pool. Remember, the pool is created by taking half the money that would normally be included in cost-of-living raises, and giving it instead to the hardest workers. OPM was also including half the money that would ordinarily go for cost-of-living raises for workers making the maximum federal wage—the catch being that those workers don't *get* cost-of-living raises.

That's small change next to the $500 million the government throws to the wind each year by misclassifying its employees. That's the figure an OPM task force calls a conservative estimate of what's wasted by "an administrative system in advanced disrepair." Another OPM study found that 11 percent of some 1.3 million white-collar positions were overgraded and 3 percent undergraded. That amounts to about $500 million in salaries, not to mention the accompanying pensions; and according to the latest OPM report, today's rate of misclassification is believed to be "significantly higher."

The 1978 reform act, predictably, further gummed up the classification system. Three Chicago doctors demoted to clerical positions still make $50,112.50 a year—under the terms of the reform act, it's all perfectly legitimate. When the Federal Railroad Retirement Board decided to eliminate 100 jobs to try and live within the means provided by the Reagan administration, the doctors, who had been evaluating disability claims, had to clean out their desks. Their jobs were contracted to private physicians. Being out of a job, however, didn't mean the doctors were out of a paycheck. Civil servants, unlucky enough to face a RIF, may accept a lower-scale position and retain their old salary for two years. They continue to enjoy perks at the higher rating too. At the end of the two years, the employees may be permanently reclassified to a lower grade, but their salary continues at the higher rate. Washington is filled with analysts, lawyers, and accountants typing memos and filing case studies now that the RIF notices have gone out.

What the hell is a GS 9?

THE FEDERAL CIVIL SERVICE, designed to end cronyism and enthrone the merit principle in government, was created in the 1880s. Today over 2 million people—the country's largest single workforce—are covered by its seemingly endless regulations and generous benefit packages.

Postal Service employees (over 700,000 people) and the military, judicial, and legislative branches are not covered by the system. Within the executive branch, the foreign service has its own civil-service hybrid; and three classes of political appointees—whose jobs appear in the so-called "Plum Book"—serve solely at the whim of the president.

Civil-service positions are generally divided among fifteen job categories, or General Service grades, with ten steps between each grade. By law each job must have its own written description and list of requirements. Salary, set by Congress, is determined by the assigned grade. In theory, government employees are to move up the classification system as their work improves and their seniority increases. The less regimented Senior Executive Service, a creation of the 1978 Civil Service Reform Act, includes bureaucrats formerly classified in grades 16 through 18. A very small percentage of these highest-ranking employees who chose not to join SES are still included in the General Service system.

All civil servants are covered by government insurance and pension plans, and three out of every five by union contracts. Civil-service unions, however, may not negotiate working hours or wages. ❑

BUT RIFS ARE A SMALL part of the picture. Much of today's grade inflation comes at the hands of government executives circumventing congressionally-limited pay raises. "When managers find that the dollars established by the pay system are not sufficient to recruit or retain employees or that the opportunities for pay adjustment are not sufficient to reward good performance, their solution often is to try to raise the classification (grade) of the position," the OPM task force says.

Such modesty. Government figures show the managers and their cohorts have done much more than just "try" to raise salaries. In 1960, for example, the average GS grade on a scale from 1 to 18 governmentwide was 6.74. The figure today is 8.26. The average federal salary when Kennedy was elected president was $5705. Today it is almost $23,000, nearly one-third more than what the average American worker earns.

Outright raises have also helped. Thanks to an amendment by Ted Stevens (R-Alaska), the Senate majority whip and a former civil servant himself, top bureaucrats may now pull in an annual base salary of $58,500—up from the $50,112.50 pay cap that had held for about three years.

Reagan, a big supporter of raising the pay ceiling, signed the provision into law in December. Shortly afterwards he threw a $40 million perk into the pot in the form of free parking. That old grinch Jimmy Carter had ordered bureaucrats to pay to park in federal lots. Government employees challenged the decision in court and lost—but Reagan decided not to make them pay. After all, the Republican national platform exalted the automobile as the truly American mode of transportation. (Bet you don't see many Chinese or Russians riding cars to work, do you?) Of course, the feds most likely to reap the benefits of free parking are those who could have easily afforded to pay. Only the upper echelons are allotted parking spaces. These same underprivileged executives are the ones that Senator Stevens has been passing the hat for. For the most part they belong to the Senior Executive Service, another innovation of the Civil Service Reform Act.

These are the career bureaucrats

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

who gave up the regular civil-service pay system for supposedly bigger and better things possible under the 1978 reform act. When it was created three years ago, the SES was to be drawn from the top three civil-service grades and sub-Cabinet political ranks: a crack corps of elite bureaucrats, a fearless group of executive commandos ready to move to any political trouble spot anywhere in Washington.

One of the ideas behind the SES was to keep these career bureaucrats from taking their marbles and going home to the private sector. It has failed in a fashion that can only be called magnificent. In the twelve months prior to January 1978, before the SES was founded, only 19 percent of the people earning the maximum federal salary had retired. In 1979, it was 28 percent. And during 1980, the last year for which the feds have statistics, it was between 90 and 95 percent.

What employee head-counts don't show is the 'invisible' workforce of consultants.

This might seem to be cause for celebration, except that a retired bureaucrat costs us almost as much as a working one, and then of course we must pay the retiree's replacement too. The government spends over $1 billion per *month* on pensions. The reason: fat pension checks (the average federal retiree gets $918 a month, not counting life and health insurance) and liberal retirement policies that encourage civil servants to get out young.

The reason the checks are so fat is that pensions, which can be as much as 80 percent of annual salary, are based on a retiree's highest annual salary rather than what he paid into the pension fund. The result is that the bureaucrats' contributions don't cover anywhere near what the government pays out for pensions. Last year taxpayers had to cough up an extra $13.8 billion to pay pensions; by the end of the century, they will have to pay $45.4 billion a year. (And remember, all the money in the pension fund is really taxpayer money anyway.) The system is so quirky that more than 100,000 federal retirees get bigger paychecks now than they did when they were working.

"Federal retirement is maintained at a level of payment which no private company could possibly maintain and still remain in business," said John Macy, a former chairman of the Civil Service Commission, in testimony to Congress. (Macy added that, between the time he left the government in 1969 and when he returned to a new job in 1979, his pension check more than doubled.) One federal study last year showed that although 80 percent of our bureaucrats like their jobs, the same percentage are thinking of retiring. Personnel officials say mournfully that this proves there's "a severe morale problem." But it sounds more like an oversupply of economic canniness.

So much for the elite SES bureaucrats who quit. What about the ones who stay? Well, the most outstanding were supposed to get bonuses—sort of like the merit-pay idea for lower-echelon workers. These bonuses, which could be as high as $20,000, were supposed to go to no more than *half* the members of the SES. Critics grumbled that it seemed unlikely that half could be outstanding, but this was dismissed as petty carping.

And those critics have been proven wrong. Lots of the time, it seemed, *more than* half were outstanding. Of the first three agencies to hand out bonuses, two of them overshot the mark—including, ahem, the Merit Systems Protection Board, which gave bonuses to two-thirds of those eligible. To date, 1734 bureaucrats have collected a cool $10 million—and to make matters worse, a GAO investigation says the awards only go to drinking buddies of the members of the various Performance Review Boards that hand the money out.

This was all supposed to change with Jimmy Carter, remember. It didn't. Then it was all supposed to change with Ronald Reagan. It hasn't. Despite Reagan's many promises to cut the federal workforce, it actually jumped by 39,274 during his first five months in office. When the *Washington Post* was ill mannered enough to report this, the Reagan people were indignant. The *Post* had unprofessionally lumped in part-time and seasonal workers with full-time permanent workers, one Reagan personnel wizard pointed out. It was unfair to suggest that just because the number of bodies had gone up, the government was bigger; as long as the part-timers were dumped before September 30, the day the final tally is taken, they didn't count. Well, in September the final tally *was* taken—with the part-timers dispatched, if only for a day—and Reagan still missed his promised personnel ceiling by 51,320.

What that count didn't show was the "invisible" workforce, consultants and other contracted personnel. Congressional control over this indirect federal workforce is extemely limited. During fiscal year 1980, the GAO estimates a whopping $72.6 billion of the taxpayers' money went to these invisible workers, compared to $111.2 billion for the direct workforce. This invisible workforce is what makes personnel ceilings useless and even counterproductive.

They are, however, showy, and Reagan is nothing if not a master of showmanship. He bragged about dismantling the Department of Energy while merely shuffling its functions, and personnel, elsewhere. The ballyhooed New Federalism is the same sort of shell game. Moving programs from Washington to state governments doesn't get rid of them; it just, well, moves them. And state and local governments are becoming miniature Washingtons. State government jumped 140 percent between 1960 and 1980, local government 117 percent, and federal only 22 percent. State and local government now employs nearly four times as many people as the federal does.

No, Reagan's tricks don't hold up well if you look closely. (And by the way, aside from presidential adviser Michael Deaver, who says he can't possibly make ends meet on $60,000 a year, nobody hears a peep about a reduction in the White House staff. At last count it was 1634.) For all his bluster, for all the shrieking heard in Washington over the last year, Reagan is just one more reformer in a city that has seen a million of them. The only honorable solution is bureaucratic hara-kiri. Cut the guts out of all those regulations, guidelines, and procedures that have manufactured years of busywork and wasted billions of dollars. But please, let's forget about "reform." ❏

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

LOVE Vs HATE

"Outstanding Achievement for Public Service"

— Columbia University School of Journalism National Magazine Award

Publisher of "lies, half-truths and distortions"

— A top Ford Motor executive, after our award-winning story that forced the recall of two million Pintos

MOTHER JONES
How President Reagan Will Change Your Life
Exxon Vs. The Sun
Jamaica's Hot Politics
How AT&T's Workers Are Drugged, Bugged And Coming Unplugged
MOTHER JONES
RADIOACTIVE WASTE: FROM HERE TO ETERNITY

A "rallying cry... above the mellowspeak"

— *Time* magazine

"A libelous reckless attack...by innuendo, lies and character assassination"

—A top official of the Laborers International Union, recently indicted for racketeering

"Inviting graphics, wry humor and colorful writing"

— *Los Angeles Times*

"Sleazy"

— a senior Reagan appointee to the CIA

ISSUE Free

Find out why some love us while others hate us. Then decide for yourself. It costs nothing to try **MOTHER JONES**. Just return this coupon today and we'll send you your first issue **free.**

Send me a free copy of **MOTHER JONES.** If I like the magazine I will pay you $12 (a 33% savings off the regular price) for a full year — nine more issues. If I decide not to subscribe for any reason, I'll just mark 'cancel' on the bill and that's it—no further obligation.

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Add $3 per year Canada; $4 per year foreign DTBDPF

MOTHER JONES • 1886 Haymarket Square, Marion, OH 43305

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

YELLOW RAIN: A Journey Through the Terror of Chemical Warfare, by Sterling Seagrave. M. Evans, 324 pp., $11.95.

Mainly on the brain

GENE LYONS

NOT EVERY AUTHOR OF A first book has the good fortune to enlist as his publicity agent the secretary of state. Such a coup would seem doubly unlikely in the case of Sterling Seagrave's *Yellow Rain*. For, amid a host of frightening allegations of Soviet chemical-and-biological-warfare atrocities in Afghanistan and Southeast Asia, Seagrave also maintains by inference that Alexander Haig has for ten years or more been party to a cynical and massive fraud designed to lull both the Russians and the American people into believing that our government is out of the biological-warfare business.

Readers may recall that in 1969, reacting to bitter domestic and international criticism of the United States' use of tear gases and "Agent Orange" defoliants in Vietnam, President Nixon announced that he was getting us out of germ warfare. He ordered stocks of anthrax, bubonic plague, and all the other virulent germs and toxins the Army had stored to be destroyed, and had research and production facilities shut down. Though he did so because Pentagon studies had concluded that germ warfare was uncontrollable and almost as dangerous to the Good Guys as the Bad Guys, Nixon has perhaps not been sufficiently praised for this act. In 1972, moreover, he signed a treaty with the Russians in which they agreed to do the same.

Now comes Sterling Seagrave, however, with this startling charge, produced in the first chapter of *Yellow Rain:* "The famous Nixon ban turned out to be just another part of the intricate Watergate hoax. The Nixon ban was a fake. And the only difference between Washington and the Hindu Kush in the end is that in the wild, lunar mountains of Afghanistan you know your enemies." This allegation, particularly in view of who was number-one aide and later supreme commander of U.S. forces in NATO during the intervening years, strikes this reviewer as newsworthy. But no, you didn't overlook it in your local newspaper or on the evening news. It didn't appear at all.

Yet there was Alexander Haig last September 13 in Berlin, at the time of the largest anti-nuclear-weapons demonstrations in Europe ever, making a speech in which he charged the Soviets with chemical-and-biological-warfare atrocities in Asia. The State Department, he promised, would produce the evidence the next day. On September 14 "significant, although preliminary" findings, based on one leaf-and-stem sample collected in Cambodia near the Thai border, showed "high levels of three potent mycotoxins of the trichothecene group." Mycotoxins are fungal poisons that occur naturally in many parts of the world, including the Soviet Union. According to the *New York Times* of September 15, "administration officials acknowledged at the briefing that the research of Sterling Seagrave, collected in a soon-to-be published book, *Yellow Rain,* had been 'instrumental' in bringing the problem . . . to the attention of the Government, but they said that it was not the book that had identified the compound. They said their own research had been going on concurrently with that reported in the book." How a problem could be brought to the attention of someone already studying it for months is unclear.

The timing, however, could not have been better from the point of view of sales. Within a couple of weeks Seagrave's just published book was reviewed very favorably in the *New York Times Book Review* by Thomas Powers, and in the *Wall Street Journal,* itself in the midst of a series of angry editorials not only denouncing Russian perfidy and brutality but questioning the character, if not the loyalty, of anybody who remained a doubter on the question. Neither the *Times* nor the *Journal* made anything at all of Seagrave's charges about his own government.

Now the stakes here are very large. Rumors have been drifting out of Afghanistan, Cambodia, and Laos about lethal chemical or biological attacks for several years now. It was partly by playing on those rumors that proponents of the Pentagon's plan to spend $4 billion to $7 billion on an entire new generation of binary-nerve-gas weapons managed to prevail last year when Congress voted on an early stage of their plan. But atrocity stories are an inevitable concomitant of war, and allegations of lethal poison attacks have been almost as frequent since the adoption of the Geneva Protocol in 1925 as have guerrilla wars themselves. They are often made by outmanned groups in isolated places fighting larger and technologically superior forces. For obvious reasons, proving such charges is notoriously difficult. Disproving them is almost impossible. That is why they make such excellent propaganda.

Since 1925 there have been only three clearly documented instances of the use of lethal chemical weapons: by the Italians in their campaign in Ethiopia in 1936, by the Japanese against the Chinese during World War II, and by the Egyptians against South Yemeni tribesmen in the 1960s. Both the State Department and the Pentagon have been trying to prove the latest Asian rumors to be true since the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in 1979.

Until last September, though, the best the government could do was a series of troubling interviews conducted with Hmong tribesmen in Thai refugee camps by Colonel Charles W.

GENE LYONS, who lives in Little Rock and writes for a number of magazines, won the 1980 National Magazine Award for Public Service. His article, "Invisible Wars," on the Pentagon's binary-nerve-gas program, appeared in the December 1981 issue of Harper's.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Lewis, an Army dermatologist who is not recognized as an expert in chemical warfare. The Hmongs' previous claim to fame was as opium farmers in the Laotian mountains and as allies of the CIA in the "secret war" conducted there by the agency during the Vietnam era. Only those who wanted badly to be convinced by these interviews were convinced. Most experts, it is fair to say, remained skeptical.

But if the Russians can be shown conclusively to be using lethal chemicals or toxins, whether directly in Afghanistan or through the agency of their Vietnamese chums in Southeast Asia, the consequences will be grave. Not only are the Soviets signatories to the Geneva Protocol, but biologically produced toxins are covered in the 1972 Biological Warfare Convention, which they also signed. Even to produce biological weapons, much less to use them, is a violation of that agreement. Indeed, given the seriousness of the matter, I think the State Department and the Reagan administration have been, if anything, underplaying the significance of their own charges. Why bother to negotiate arms agreements with the Russians at all, one might well ask, if they violate them so cynically, so viciously, and on so small a pretext? The Russians could squat on Asian peasants forever without using poisons.

Let us get on, however, to the book the State Department found "instrumental" in its search for evidence. As a stylist, Seagrave betrays his journalistic origins. His most recent job has been as an editor at Time-Life Books,' this after short tours with the *Washington Post* and the *Pittsburgh Press,* and, he told an interviewer from the *Post,* ten years of free-lancing. Since I had never encountered Seagrave's byline, I took the trouble of trying to determine where it had appeared. From 1976 through 1980, according to the *Readers' Guide*, Sterling Seagrave published exactly one article—in *The Smithsonian* magazine, about astronomers. Perhaps he has other sources of income. Here is a more or less characteristic swatch of Seagravian prose, a sort of souped-up *Time*-ese with spy-thriller overtones: Little did he know, he writes, that the book

> would accidentally involve me in something so bizarre and harrowing that it would plunge me into four years of furious investigation and take me to the jungles of Laos, to the Russian-patrolled mountain wastes of northeastern Afghanistan, to the sullen deserts along the Red Sea—in search of the elusive evidence of mass murder. . . . I recall somebody saying that the dragons are there all along in the darkness; we pretend that they do not exist because we have no choice, but every now and then we pass unwarily by a hole in the ground or a cave in a cliff and get scorched by a blast from the beast. . . . I had unwittingly let myself be drawn into a mystery that began as a simple riddle and grew and grew until I realized that I was holding the tail of the beast. The time had long past [*sic*] when it would do any good to call in a quavering voice for an exorcist.

Well, my goodness. I had always thought exorcists dealt with demons; I think it's a knight-errant you want when you have a dragon by the tail. The event that provokes this outburst, incidentally, is landing in a commercial jet at Denver's Stapleton Airport, hard by the Army's Rocky Mountain Arsenal.

More than esthetics is involved. A man who will write prose like that will sacrifice accuracy for a hit of dragon breath every time. The fact is that Seagrave writes like a hack, reasons sophomorically at best, and is prone to wild exaggerations based on little or no factual evidence. His charges against his perhaps unwitting publicist Alexander Haig have no visible merit. He provides not a particle of serious evidence that the Pentagon is still in the germ-warfare business. Reading *Yellow Rain* is like attending a literary magic show. As the pages turn, supposition becomes possibility, which changes to probability, which metamorphoses into pseudofact, all by means of a sort of question begging and sleight of hand. So how did this free-swinging bozo gain influence at the State Department? Well might you ask. The simple truth seems to be that he believes what the Reagan administration wants to believe about the Russians. Oh my, does he believe.

Seagrave, who was raised in Burma as the son of American medical missionaries there, says he was troubled with the rumors of Russian atrocities from the first, but was moved to action in August 1979 "when a man with a leg bone in his suitcase knocked apprehensively at my door" in Washington, D.C. This mysterious party told of encountering an equally mysterious quartet of French mercenaries in the jungles of Laos while he was searching for the remains of U.S. pilots, which explains the leg bone. The mercenaries (probably looking for heroin, Seagrave later hypothesizes) told the stranger of gas attacks on Hmong villages. Then they guided

RANDY JONES

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

him to an airplane wreck and disappeared. Why Seagrave needed this impetus is not clear; reports of the alleged gas attacks were appearing regularly that month in American newspapers. But it does make a nice story.

Checking with acquaintances in the State Department, Seagrave learned that a U.S. military team was about to leave for Thailand to investigate the evidence, so off he went. The leader of that team was the above-mentioned Colonel Lewis, the Army dermatologist. The results of Lewis's investigation, as well as his testimony and that of colleagues and State Department officials, may be found in a House Foreign Affairs Committee document entitled *Use of Chemical Agents in Southeast Asia Since the Vietnam War,* dated December 12, 1979.

The weakness in Lewis's account was that refugees tend to tell their hosts what they want to hear.

The weakness in Lewis's accounts was that refugees tend to tell their hosts what they want to hear. Besides the obvious propaganda advantages to the Hmong of claiming their enemy was fighting dirty, there was also the question of Lewis's methodology. The Thai camps were and are more like prisons than refugee shelters. Life there was barely supportable. In walked an American military officer anxious to hear about gas attacks. What would you do? Then there was the questionnaire Lewis used, which is reprinted on pages 21 to 23 of the hearing record. Most of the questions were leading, and implied the symptoms sought. For example, there was the following series on chest pain: "Did it hurt to breathe? Was it hard to breathe? Did it hurt deep in your chest? Did it feel like your chest was being crushed? How did your heart beat? Very fast? Very slow?"

Lewis's results, perhaps not surprisingly in view of the fact that he was interviewing illiterate tribesmen some months after the alleged attacks—too long after, in fact, for blood or skin samples to have been worth taking—indicated a confusing array of symptoms. He concluded that probably three separate toxic agents were used in some combination: nerve gas, mustard gas, and a third unknown substance that would account for the bleeding and vomiting of blood he turned up on his questionnaires.

None of the above (except for Lewis's conclusions), I should point out, appears in *Yellow Rain.* One reason experts tended to doubt Lewis was overkill. No single known toxic agent or combination of agents produces the entire grab-bag of symptoms the Hmong reported. Mixing mustard gas with nerve agents would be silly. Why blister the skin of someone who is going to die within minutes from nerve gas, which, depending on how it enters the system, is 300 to 2000 times more toxic than the World War I chemical? Indeed, Professor Matthew Meselson of Harvard, perhaps the leading American expert on chemical warfare, pointed out that most of the symptoms reported by the Hmong could be accounted for by a tear gas like DM (or adamsite), which reacts with water to form arsenical compounds that can be fatal, particularly to very old or very young people or those weakened by malnutrition. DM was used by the United States in Southeast Asia, despite its listing under military regulations as not for use "where deaths are not acceptable." Montagnards in South Vietnam, it will be recalled, reported deaths from the herbicides that were sprayed on their territory. No entirely satisfactory explanation was ever found. As for Lewis's three-agent theory, it has ceased to be mentioned recently, having given way to Seagrave's mycotoxins.

After flying all the way to Thailand, however, Seagrave apparently contented himself with talking to Lewis and his colleagues in a Bangkok bar, then drove out to the refugee camps and conducted a single interview of his own. That one interview has been widely quoted by early reviewers, but bears looking at again:

> We saw the colored gas, and the people in the village began to lie down and go to sleep. Then the MiGs came back and dropped the bags. When the bags burst, the powder inside turned into yellow gas like a cloud. When it came down it was like yellow rain.
>
> We were frightened, but we had many relatives in the village. We wanted to help them. So we went back. Most of the people were already dead. There was blood coming from their noses and ears, and blisters appeared on their skin. Their skin was turning yellow. All the chickens, dogs, and pigs were also dead. The people who were not dead were jerking like fish when you take them out of water. Their skins were already yellow. Soon some of them turned black and they got blisters like the others. Blood came from their noses and they died.

This is strong stuff. So strong, in fact, that nobody seems to have wondered why Seagrave claims he had to go all the way to Thailand to get it. Lewis provided scores of similar accounts, some so similar to Seagrave's as to make reading his like an experience of *déjà vu.* The very phrase "yellow rain" appeared in a column by Stanley Karnow in the *Washington Post* on August 20, 1979, where it was attributed to an English-speaking Hmong named Vang Dua Chang. Indeed, if Seagrave learned anything in Thailand that did not appear in either the *Post* or the *Washington Star* that month, I could not find it. A cynic might be inclined to wonder whether he went there at all.

Though it came advertised as a heroic job of investigative reporting, *Yellow Rain* lacks all evidence of such heroism. Seagrave, who has lived in several places in Asia and evidently traveled all over the world, claims research trips to not only Thailand, but Afghanistan, Pakistan, Laos, England, Sweden, France, Belgium, and other countries. Little or nothing that he gets in any of those places could not have been gotten in any decent library or by telephone. Most of the book, in fact, consists of a popularized history of chemical warfare taken from sources easily available. Not once, for the benefit of readers who may have a different impression, did Seagrave witness so much as a shot fired in anger, much less a chemical or toxic attack. He interviews no disinterested parties who did. Nor does he visit the scenes of the alleged incidents. He reports talking to no skeptics. Not a particle of the physical evidence the State Department cites came to them through Seagrave's efforts. No magazine I have ever worked for would stand for such large expenses for so small a result. Either Seagrave has a very generous publisher or deep pockets of his own.

So how did he crack the trichothecene case? The answer depends

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

partly on whether you read *Yellow Rain* or what Seagrave characterizes as a "local boy makes good" interview he gave the *Washington Post* last November. In the book Seagrave focuses on one symptom reported by some of Colonel Lewis's Hmong subjects: the coughing or vomiting of blood. All of a sudden, blood is gushing everywhere, in Laos, Afghanistan, and in murky corners of the world wherever enemies of the Soviet Union meet untimely deaths. One pivotal chapter called "Eye of Newt, Toe of Frog" centers on the assassination of dissidents and spies. Its standards of evidence beggar even those of Seagrave's charges against the U.S. government. Unfortunately, space does not permit a full accounting of the author's methodology, but it is really quite extraordinary. At one point he assures us that a certain Bulgarian, Simeonov, "could have been killed with scores of poisons, including . . . cyanide, saxitoxin, or something new, and it would have metabolized during the twenty hours the body lay undiscovered." If indeed corpses can metabolize anything at all, much less "scores of poisons," most of Agatha Christie and P. D. James will have to be rewritten.

trip to Hawaii and a conversation with a professor there, or else by a meeting near Washington of top-level intelligence types, depending on whether you believe his book or his account to the *Post*. Either way, he was disappointed: "I thought: four years of work down the drain. But after that meeting in Rosslyn a woman came up to me. She was a microbiologist working at Fort Detrick. She suggested it might be mycotoxins. I sat down in January and read all the texts on mycotoxins. It was right there in front of me."

IN 'YELLOW RAIN' ITSELF the key piece of evidence on trichothecene mycotoxins Seagrave cites is a "previously classified" and still unpublished report by the U.S. Army Medical Intelligence Division at Fort Detrick. It is dated, according to the author, January 1981. One would expect a reporter with half Seagrave's enthusiasm for plots and coincidences, especially one convinced that the Army has been lying about germ warfare for ten years, to be just a mite skeptical of his source here. At least he might have checked its accuracy with somebody outside the government. How "instrumental," in any event, can a journalist have been to a government inquiry when he was merely slipped a classified report?

'Yellow Rain' proves none of its important assertions. Rather, its incompetence makes it bad even as propaganda. So why does the State Department find it so persuasive?

"If this [poison thrown in his face] is what happened to Simeonov," our author continues, "and it seems to me the only reasonable explanation, then the superpoison that killed him can only be guessed at. It could have been the same strange poison being used in Laos and Afghanistan. Simeonov after all had strangled in his own blood." English authorities concluded that the man had fainted due to a chronic heart condition, fallen down a flight of stairs, broken his nose, and drowned in blood. Seagrave has no contrary evidence, just an active imagination.

For a long time he is convinced that the new "superpoison" he privately dubs "Specter" is palytoxin, a substance extracted from coral. But he is disabused of his theory—either by a

Unfortunately for Seagrave's case, there is no evidence in the scientific literature that the trichothecene mycotoxin causes the massive bleeding that he, his alleged Hmong informant, and the State Department speak of. The State Department's Richard Burt recently asserted that the poisons produce "all of the symptoms I have mentioned [he was referring to the Lewis report] and they are not known to produce any symptoms not reported." He made particular reference to the vomiting of blood: "Within an hour they would die, apparently of shock and the massive loss of blood from the stomach." But Professor Chester Mirocha of the University of Minnesota, who identified samples given him by the State Department, told *Science* magazine recently that animals given fifty times the lethal dosage of the toxin vomit and suffer paralysis of the hindquarters, but "there is no rapid hemorrhaging." Burt also mentioned that a man returning one of the four samples that the State Department has relied on in its charges—pond water from Cambodia—accidently spilled some on his clothes and became ill with the same symptoms. Neutral scientists are having trouble with that one. To begin with, Burt maintained that the concentration found, sixty-six parts per million of trichothecene in water, was many times the lethal dosage. Professor Meselson of Harvard calculates that one would have to drink eight gallons of water very quickly to make that a true statement. James Bamburg of Colorado State has done experimental work with pure trichothecene and once spilled some on his hand and arm in a laboratory accident. It deadened skin there and made him feel ill for a couple of days, but he did not vomit blood. At sixty-six parts per million he doubts there would be any effect at all. Furthermore, neither trichothecene nor the related mycotoxins the State Department says it found is the "super-poison" Seagrave claims. The lethal dosage is one milligram per kilo of body weight; any number of other chemicals and toxins are exponentially more deadly, just as easy to make, and harder to detect.

In short, *Yellow Rain* proves none of its important assertions. Rather, its incompetence makes it bad even as propaganda. How and why the State Department and such publications as the *Wall Street Journal* and *Newsweek* have found the book so persuasive I cannot say. But then, to eyes not blinded by prosecutorial zeal, none of the evidence produced by the State Department in support of its charges against the Russians is at all convincing. I hasten to add here that I put no kind of brutality past the Soviet government when what it perceives as its vital interests are involved. Indeed, given the spirit-numbing genocidal horrors that have taken place in Southeast Asia over the past twenty years, it may seem morally absurd to haggle over whether the peasants of Asia are being attacked with gases, toxins, bullets, or clubs. But the distinc-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

tion is an important one.

The civilized world has rejected chemical warfare since 1925. No signatory has ever been proved to have attacked another with gas, poison, or germs since it went into effect. (The reason it took the United States so long to ratify the treaty was persistent opposition and propagandizing by what is now the U.S. Army Chemical Corps. Using gas and germs was advertised during the 1950s and early 1960s as the only way America could defeat the communist hordes of Asia short of nuclear Armageddon.) The 1972 biological-warfare treaty that the State Department now accuses the Russians of violating is one made out of mutual fear; let that kind of fighting begin and there might be no end short of mutual destruction. The parallel with nuclear-arms talks is clear. A chemical-war treaty that has been under discussion between the United States and the Soviets in Geneva since 1976 has made some progress, despite the allegations of binary-nerve-gas proponents that the negotiations are a cynical ruse designed to lull the West into defenselessness. But for that charge, as well as the others we have discussed, to be true would require extraordinary recklessness and stupidity on the Soviets' part.

Recklessness, stupidity, and brutality are never to be discounted in human events, especially where great powers are concerned. But when one is making accusations of such gravity, a very high order of proof ought to be required. For the State Department to attach any degree of credibility at all to Seagrave's rantings shows poor judgment at best. Trichothecene cannot be shown to cause the symptoms claimed for it. State Department experts concede that they cannot determine how the poisons they have found are introduced into the human body. The State Department also will not explain how the samples it has had tested came into its hands, except to deny earlier reports that one of the four was provided by the Khmer Rouge, as the *Washington Post* reported. Seagrave says the Thai military provided some samples. Another, Richard Burt conceded in his Senate testimony, came from *Soldier of Fortune* magazine, a publication for mercenaries with roughly the credibility of *Hustler* or the *National Enquirer*. ABC news obtained its samples from a hospital administrator, who says he got it from Hmong tribesmen who collected it in Laos. Again, not a disinterested party in the lot. With evidence so tenuous, a jury wouldn't convict a man of purse snatching.

Some scientists deny the State Department's claim that trichothecenes do not occur naturally in Southeast Asia. Almost nothing is known about what does and does not grow in those jungles. *Science* reported in October that researchers at the University of Maryland have found levels of the toxin several times higher than the samples examined in a Brazilian shrub. Even the assertion made by Seagrave and the State Department that high levels of technology are required to synthesize the poison—the inferential evidence linking the Russians—turns out not to be true. Professor Bamburg told the *New York Times*, "You can do it in your basement or a converted dog kennel." He told me he could produce grams and even kilograms of the stuff using only the equipment he has on hand in his laboratory. None of the numerous parties who would profit from a biological-warfare hoax would have found it very difficult to arrange.

If the Laotian government, with the help of the Vietnamese and the Russians, is indeed conducting a genocidal campaign against the Hmong, at least one American who traveled repeatedly in the area last year says he saw no evidence of it. Fred Swartzendruber, a Mennonite missionary, told *Science*'s Nicholas Wade that he spent from October 1979 until May 1981 traveling the Laotian boondocks, and because he kept hearing persistent reports of chemical warfare in Bangkok, made a point of asking. He could find no Hmong or anybody else who knew anything of "yellow rain." Indeed, he said, there seemed to be little, if any, fighting going on in Laos at all, except for some around Phu Bia mountain.

All we have to go on are facts and logic. The credulity of the State Department is shocking, but, given the political circumstances in Europe, where Haig seeks to convince the general public that the Russians, and not we, are the real enemy, not especially surprising. The passivity of the press, however (Philip Boffey of the *New York Times* and Nicholas Wade of *Science* excepted), is less understandable and not so easily forgiven. If there is solid proof, then let us have it. If there is not, then whether these allegations are true or false, making them in so amateurish a fashion can have no good result. ❑

EVERY SECRET THING, by Patricia Campbell Hearst. Doubleday, 466 pp., $17.95.

Patricia Hearst's newest script

GLENN GARVIN

DID SHE OR DIDN'T SHE? Eights years later, we're still arguing about it. Did a kidnapped newspaper heiress really join her captors in blazing a trail of terror down the California coast? The advertising for Patricia Hearst's new book promises that "Finally, the only person who really knows tells what really happened"— but after 466 pages the answer seems as elusive as ever.

Much of the problem lies with Hearst herself (who prefers to be called Patricia or Pat these days, having seen "Patty" in one too many shrieking headlines). Even a sympathetic observer who *wants* to believe her story has to decide which one to accept. For she's told too many: on those harrowing tapes she sent to the news media after her kidnapping by the terrorist Symbionese Liberation Army (the left's answer to John Belushi—loud, buffoonish, but capable of great destruction); in the "Tania interview," an autobiographical description of her conversion to the SLA, composed while she was still underground; in a long affidavit she signed in a vain attempt to win release on bail after her capture by the FBI; in her trial testimony itself; and—finally, one supposes—in this book.

To say that these various stories don't mesh is to be quite charitable. For instance, in the bail affidavit that Hearst signed, she said that after her kidnapping she was kept blindfolded in a closet for several weeks. "During this period," the affidavit continues, "she was given liquids to drink. When the blindfold was removed, she felt as

GLENN GARVIN is the editor of INQUIRY. He helped cover the Hearst kidnapping and its aftermath for Time.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

if she were on some LSD trip; everything was out of proportion, big and distorted."

Contrast that with the description in *Every Secret Thing* of the day the blindfold came off:

> There they were, their faces unmasked, sitting around in a circle on the floor, grinning at me, happy in their eagerness to witness my initial reactions to them.
>
> I did not dare give voice to my first thoughts: Oh, God, what a bunch of ordinary-looking unattractive little people. I suppose I was disappointed. . . . Somehow I had expected them to look bigger, stronger, more commanding.

Later, after Hearst joined—or pretended to join, depending on your favorite version—the SLA, she began helping them plan a bank robbery, which they plotted not so much for the money as for the publicity. During her trial she tried to minimize her part in the planning. Her attorney, F. Lee Bailey, asked her in court: "Were you drilled on the topography of the area [of the bank] where the streets were?" Answered Hearst: "No. No I wasn't."

But in her book Hearst writes:

> We all studied road maps of the area, so that no one would get lost. Map study was perhaps my favorite activity. I much preferred sitting in a corner feigning a concentrated study of a road map of San Francisco streets, while the others were running about practicing more strenuous [read: more violent] activities.

The robbery took place as planned, and the SLA gunned down two innocent bystanders in the process. At her trial, Hearst said the bank robbery was a turning point for her; after it, she felt she was irrevocably branded a criminal, and return to her old life was impossible—even though the FBI filed no charges against her and issued only a subpoena seeking her as a material witness to the robbery. This exchange took place in court:

> Mr. BAILEY: Did you become aware through any means that a warrant had been placed against you as a material witness but not as a bank robber?
>
> Miss HEARST: Well, I thought it was the same thing.
>
> Mr. BAILEY: Did you know any different?
>
> Miss HEARST: No.

But in her book, Hearst says that not only was she aware of the difference, but that it miffed her fellow robbers. "Zoya [Patricia Soltysik] was furious that the authorities had cited me only as a material witness, saying that this clearly showed the state's favoritism toward the rich and privileged," Hearst writes. "Yolanda [Emily Harris] agreed with her."

During her trial, Hearst did her best to keep from filling in any details of the SLA members' personalities; the strategy seemed to be to portray them as lethal automatons to be feared. Typical was her response to federal prosecutor James Browning during cross-examination:

> Mr. BROWNING: When you got back to that apartment [after the robbery], everybody was pretty happy, were they not?
>
> Miss HEARST: I don't remember that, no.
>
> Mr. BROWNING: You don't remember people being in an exuberant mood?
>
> Miss HEARST: Not really, no. There was [*sic*] watches at the windows and a guard at the door, and they just waited for everybody to get back, and the watches continued.

Now her account from *Every Secret Thing:*

> Once back in the safehouse, they broke out in laughter, broad grins, and congratulations. Gelina [Angela Atwood] spilled the bills out of the stuff bag onto a blanket spread on the floor. The money cascaded all over the place and she began to gather it into a heap, laughing, stuffing one twenty-dollar bill into her mouth, saying, "It looks so good, I could eat it."

There are numerous other contradictions between Hearst the criminal defendant and Hearst the best-selling author. During the trial Hearst claimed she was threatened with death if she didn't make a tape recording announcing her conversion to the SLA. In the book there's no mention of the threat. At trial she said there was no SLA rule about firing warning shots over the heads of people who were fighting with SLA members; when she did just that at a sporting-goods store in Los Angeles, to save two SLA "soldiers" who had been caught shoplifting, it was her own humanitarian innovation. Now, in the book, Hearst concedes she had been drilled on this very tactic. And various activities that Hearst once blamed on Donald DeFreeze—better known as Cinque, the enigmatic and vicious black escaped convict who led the SLA—she now attributes to William and Emily Harris, two other members of the sect whom she dearly hates. Her narrative makes it clear that she hates Cinque too—but there's an important difference. Cinque is dead, killed in the blazing Los Angeles firefight that took six lives and destroyed the SLA. The Harrises are very much alive—and

BRUCE MCGILLIVRAY

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

they'll be facing a California parole board next year.

TO DISMISS HEARST'S BOOK as a pack of self-serving lies, however, would be both cruel and unfair. Hers is a complicated dilemma that tears at the very heart of most of what we believe about free will and criminal justice. For underneath all the exaggerations, untruths, and posturings, there remain a few undisputed facts: Patricia Hearst was kidnapped. She was held, blindfolded, in a closet for seven or eight weeks. Her life was threatened, not once but many times. Her access to information was totally controlled by a group of savage thugs, who, if often amazingly stupid (they turned their television set to the wall during meetings so that the government couldn't spy on them through it, and they also warned the captive Hearst not to use her thoughts to contact any psychics), were nevertheless possessed of a certain animal cunning.

Even though there are good reasons to sympathize with Hearst, she has always made it easier not to—because she lies and lies again.

The SLA used their control of what Hearst could see or hear of the outside world to spectacular advantage, often aided by her family's inept response to the kidnapping and the seemingly fathomless incompetence of the U.S. Justice Department. The SLA told Hearst that no one cared about her. In short order: Her father picked a collection of boobs to run the free-food distribution program that was supposed to ransom her; the program was badly botched. Her mother, undeterred by the SLA's bitter criticism of her voting record as a University of California regent, accepted another appointment to the UC board and then turned down an offer to have news of the appointment withheld until the kidnapping was resolved. And Attorney General William Saxbe made a peculiar sort of boast. "If authorities knew where Miss Hearst was being held," Saxbe said, "they'd go in and get her."

The SLA seized on this last remark; the FBI obviously wasn't concerned about Hearst's safety—in fact, they might even *want* to kill her, to discredit the left. The FBI promptly lent credence to this reasoning by directing the firefight in Los Angeles, where literally thousands of bullets were fired into an SLA house even as authorities conceded that they didn't have any idea if Hearst was inside or not. (Of course, Hearst wouldn't have been kidnapped in the first place if police had been doing their job. More than three weeks before the kidnapping, police arrested two SLA members, but then took their time about going to their house. By the time the cops arrived the next day, the SLA had fled. Even so, the police found a green notebook containing a massive hit list of corporate executives, government officials, and their families, who were marked for kidnapping or death. One entry read: "At UC, That daughter of Hearst . . . Patricia Campbell Hearst—Jr. Art History—On the nite of the full moon Jan. 7th." Incredibly, they didn't bother to warn her. Later still, in the days just after the kidnapping, the FBI failed to put any surveillance on a bank where it knew one SLA member had a large bank account, even though there were 300 agents working on the case. The SLA member showed up, blithely withdrew her money, and disappeared again. Almost as embarrassing for the FBI was the fact that a blue Volkswagen that was used in the kidnapping, which was the object of a statewide search, was parked in the FBI garage in San Francisco the whole time. One of the agency's secretaries had bought it and drove it to work every single day.)

Given all these circumstances, should we hold Hearst responsible for her criminal behavior? (It goes deeper than just the San Francisco bank robbery; in her book, she admits being party to two other bank robberies and a host of bombings.) We know that stronger people than a nineteen-year-old college girl from a sheltered family can crack under this kind of strain—for instance, the Hungarian Cardinal Mindszenty, who after thirty-five days of imprisonment by his country's communist regime admitted to spying for the West and numerous other, equally absurd, crimes. We know of the "confessions" of American POWs in North Korea, as well as those of the USS *Pueblo* crew. And the military was extraordinarily lenient with returning POWs who cooperated with their North Vietnamese captors. (F. Lee Bailey told Hearst that "if you were being tried in a military court, Patty, I could get you acquitted in one day.")

All these men were victims of what psychologists call "coercive persuasion." This process involves *elements* of coercion; that is, the victims are held against their will and subjected to unpleasant circumstances. But it also involves real persuasion, in that the victims eventually come to sincerely believe in what they say or do. Sensible people often suspect, with good reason, that any concept developed by psychologists has no place in a courtroom. But in this case I wonder. I am a month older than Patricia Hearst; when she was kidnapped I was attending college just thirty miles away. I grew up in a much less protected environment, and I was also considerably more politically aware than she was. But how would I have fared if I were locked in a closet for two months?

That question is not so easily answered. Even the jurors who convicted her had trouble with it. At a reunion a year after the trial, the eleven jurors who attended unanimously agreed that, if they had to do it over again, they would acquit Hearst. It seems that when the jurors went back to their private lives after being sequestered for six weeks during the trial, several of them had serious trouble readjusting. There were difficulties at work and at home; at least two marriages broke up. What the jurors found was that even this comparatively mild form of isolation had sadly disrupted the fabric of their lives.

But even though there are good reasons to sympathize with Hearst, she has always made it much easier not to—because she lies. When she was captured by the FBI, the first thing she did was sign that infamous affidavit asking for bail, a massive compilation of lies. Then she authorized a defense that pled an untidy mixture of coercion and coercive persuasion; she told the jurors, in effect, that "Everything I did, I did because a gun was on

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

me, except for a few parts where I was brainwashed." Her book carries that a step further. "Everything I did," it says, in effect, "I did because a gun was on me, and the proof is that I cried about it all the time, except for a few parts where I was brainwashed." So we have a surreal picture of Hearst crisscrossing the country with the Harrises, helping them recruit members to form a new terrorist group; planting bombs that were designed not just for symbolic destruction, but to kill people; sticking up banks, including one robbery where a woman was brutally murdered with a shotgun. But, Hearst says, she was crying and complaining and getting drunk on cheap red wine all the time—she wasn't enjoying it.

None of this squares with what we know of Hearst either before or after the kidnapping. Her friends from both periods say she has always been a willful young woman with a sharp tongue that she wielded mercilessly when she was crossed. Indeed, one member of her post-SLA radical group with no ax to grind—remember, this group had nothing to do with her kidnapping and certainly was not holding her against her will—says that Hearst was anything but the beaten and forlorn victim she portrays in her book. She squabbled constantly with William and Emily Harris over matters both personal and political, and once, in an argument with William Harris, retorted: "Kiss my cunt, Adolf." (She seems not to have mellowed with age; in her new *Playboy* interview she says burning to death was "too good" for the six SLA members who died in Los Angeles, and suggests that the Harrises ought to kill themselves.)

Investigative reporter Paul Avery, coauthor of the best book on the SLA (the little-noticed but very good *The Voices of Guns*), says that it is too harsh to say that Hearst lies. "It could well be that she believes she's telling the truth now," Avery muses. "She's been through so much—who knows what she thinks? Maybe not even her." Perhaps she was as close to the truth as she'll ever get in a quiet and little-reported moment during an otherwise acrimonious cross-examination in her trial.

"Do you now feel," asked prosecutor Browning, "that you had in fact been brainwashed at any time, Miss Hearst?"

In a quiet voice she replied: "I'm not sure what happened to me." ❑

FILM

***ONE FROM THE HEART*, directed by Francis Coppola.**

Coppola's electric train

STEPHEN HARVEY

*THE AD COPY FOR FRANcis Coppola's *One From the Heart* describes it as "a new kind of old-fashioned romance"; the oxymoronic symmetry of this catch phrase sums up the confusion that has defined his Zoetrope traveling circus from the start. Coppola has spent most of his career railing against the controls and compromises imposed by moguls and accountants on the creators who actually make the movies, in the next breath rhapsodizing with nostalgic fervor over that most dictatorial system of all, the movie factory of the 1930s and '40s. To hear Coppola tell it (as he has, frequently, in the pages of *Variety*), the *ancien régime* was at its best a happy extended family united by a common goal. Which, no doubt, was most easily perceived if you happened to be the daddy, rather than an obscure third cousin once removed; it would be amusing to time-travel Coppola back to 1938 as a $100-a-week junior writer at Fox specializing in Jane Withers vehicles, and then ask him how he felt about the shared mission of that joyous clan shackled to the celluloid assembly line.

At any rate, it was this rapturous delusion that served as the model for Zoetrope, a small-scale, high-tech movie Oz with a swarm of actors, artisans, and auteurs under contract to Coppola the Wizard. Indeed, this enterprise has increasingly resembled one of the legendary studios of yore; unfortunately, it happens to be RKO in its final years, under the typically level-headed stewardship of Howard Hughes. The first efforts confected at his new complex, Wim Wenders's *Hammett* and Caleb Deschanel's *The Escape Artist*, have yet to reach the screen, apparently because Coppola as producer has deemed them unreleasable, pending further retooling by the directors under his employ. All subsequent projects have been placed on hold, with the fate of his studio "family" suspended in the balance, awaiting the reception accorded Coppola's own creation—an intimate musical love-story that weighed in at the outsized production cost of $23 million.

After protracted wranglings with Paramount, which was to have distributed the film, Coppola unburdened his dissatisfactions to the press; subsequently, he was to complain that this coverage distorted his squabbles out of all proportion. In the meantime he declared his determination to present his film to "the people," the rightful arbiters of *One From the Heart*'s much-vaunted merits. Accordingly, he booked the film for one-night engagements at New York's Radio City Music Hall and a theater in Los Angeles, where it was largely attended by such ordinary folks as critics, distributors, exhibitors, celebrities, Coppoloids, and those *Zeitgeist* mavens who attend such events for the pleasure of applauding their own sophistication. The film they witnessed is a personal endeavor if there ever was one. It could only have been made by a film maker at war with himself—the barnstorming instincts of P.T. Barnum clashing with the self-image (and some of the talent) of a willfully martyred artiste like Erich von Stroheim.

As a hybrid of highly evolved technology and shamelessly reductive dramaturgy, *One From the Heart* manages stubbornly to extract the least productive use from both. The director's absorption in video electronics—the Steadicam camera and the like—is so self-consciously overloaded that it amounts finally to an absence of style in any real sense. And among all the artifacts constructed in the Zoetrope

STEPHEN HARVEY is INQUIRY's film reviewer and the coordinator of the film study program at the Museum of Modern Art in New York City.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

research lab for the occasion, the script by Coppola and Armyan Bernstein is the most computer-fabricated of them all. Two humanoid stereotypes, a mechanic (Frederic Forrest) and a travel-agency employee (Teri Garr) have tired of each other after five years of cohabitation; on the eve of the Fourth of July, each proclaims his independence by parting to sample the fireworks of an exotic dreamboat with Continental accent and the savoir-faire to match (respectively supplied by Nastassia Kinski and Raul Julia). By the end, of course, they've been reunited beside their prosaic neon-reflecting plaster hearth, just like in the movies.

This movie-long spat between Garr and Forrest is delineated with the bald-faced billboarding of your basic "Love Boat" episode. Coppola relentlessly intercuts from mumble-tongued Forrest, tormented with hurt pride, longing, self-doubt, and adulterous rapture, to pout-cheeked Garr, suffering from same; they even have a matched set of sidekick stooges to kvetch at. All this underscored parallelism ostensibly conveys the sense that for all their skirmishes, their psyches are really in tune—that they are in fact Made For Each Other. Yet this couple is just the split-mirror image of the same authorial cliché. Coppola has held fast to a perverse notion of what made the best old movies so romantic—he apparently thinks their real potency lay in those hack formulas that the studio-era pros spent careers trying to subvert or camouflage, or avoid entirely when they could get away with it. When audiences in the thirties were asked to swallow James Stewart and Carole Lombard as a typical married couple, whose tribulations would lead to an optimistic fade-out, the dutifully sanitized and dovetailed plot was the acceptable pretext for all the rest. What fleshed it out into something distinctive was the writers' ear for dramatic speech, and the delightful fact that if the stars weren't exactly dead ringers for the newlyweds next door, at least they were resplendently James Stewart and Carole Lombard.

NO SUCH DISTRACTIONS divert the eye from *One From the Heart*'s banal premise—apart from the blinding barrage of visual clutter, which turns the actors into the more pallid of the inanimate objects Coppola's camera swoops toward. These characters are supposed to be the sort of inarticulate *menschen* we slobs in the audience can identify with, humdrum lives and sagging flesh that their souls' glamorous longings transcend. The dialogue they utter has neither the tang of spoken vernacular nor the snap of artful repartee that marked the movie era Coppola admires. When Forrest remarks, "The early bird gets the worm—but who the hell wants a worm?" it's really a joke on the screenwriters rather than a comment on their hero's befuddled wits. We're supposed to find it ironic and poignant when the heroine longs

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

to find a lover who will sing to her, while she essays a tango with the languor of Dolores del Rio, but her delusions are nothing compared to Coppola's, or the limitations of his cast.

If Forrest and Garr are acting far too hard to be convincing as examples of us anonymous masses, they nonetheless lack the particular magnetism of authentic stars, Coppola's directorial fiat to the contrary. They compensate by emulating the trademarks of their predecessors. Garbed in a flab-filled T-shirt as he mutters teary-eyed I-coulda-been-a-contender–isms, Frederic Forrest does a keen Marlon Brando impersonation (the best in weeks), while Teri Garr rejuvenates that old Shirley MacLaine favorite, the perky but bedraggled hoyden. You'd never know from his work here that Raul Julia's main problem in the theater is to learn to rein in that galvanic temperament of his. In *One From the Heart* he's scarcely as vivid as George Metaxa or any other of those Latin capons whom Ginger inevitably spurned for Fred in the final reel. Nastassia Kinski is the one person in the film whom the camera really loves; her hair shorn in a pixie bob, she rather recalls those life-hungry gamines with a European pedigree—the Caron/Hepburn school, which graduated its last laureates in the late fifties—but the elusive, submerged sensuality she gives off is distinctly modern and all hers. For the most part she's used as an ersatz-Fellini fantasy figure—the blue-tinted centerpiece of a video-game montage, a wet-dream apparition in white frolicking in a human-sized highball glass. She appears so fleetingly that you can't tell if Coppola is trying to protect Kinski from exposing her limitations or restrain her from overwhelming the desultory duo at the movie's center.

Naturally, Coppola's die-hard cheerleaders would insist that such objections are trivial when measured against the dazzling imagery he's achieved. Yet, what's the point of all that visual legerdemain if it produces nothing but the preening awareness of its own virtuosity? Vittorio Storaro is indisputably one of the world's great cinematographers, but, like all the film's visual trappings, his work here is suffocatingly picturesque. He can bathe the screen in scarlet or aquamarine or beige and gray Venetian-slat shadows whenever he wants without worrying if this conveys the mood of the moment; this is Francis in Vegas-land, and anything goes because none of the human equation really matters. In any event, certain of *One From the Heart*'s trumpeted filmic innovations are just the screen equivalents of tricks the theater's known about for decades, if not centuries. The movie frequently counterpoints a dramatic vignette in the foreground by adding a parallel moment behind it, gradually exposed as through a transparent scrim. It's novel to see this in the movies, I suppose, yet the effect is hardly startling. The fact that Coppola probably achieved this in the lab rather than with lights and canvas may mean a great deal to him and to his technicians. To the civilian eye, however, it's no different from the commonplaces accomplished by any set or lighting designer worth his theatrical union card.

Coppola and his production designer, Dean Tavoularis, must have thought it an amusing conceit to create a sound-stage imitation of that most artificial of real-life landscapes, Las Vegas. What they couldn't reproduce, for all their skill, is the town's lurid vitality; instead you feel trapped inside an overlit terrarium dotted with miniature motels in place of stunted cacti. Tavoularis's *pièce de résistance* is a neon-drenched, forced-perspective replica of the city's downtown strip. Populated with hordes of dress extras conspicuously exuding Background Atmosphere, it calls to mind climactic scenes from several of Vincente Minnelli's movies of the fifties and early sixties (the penny-arcade business in *The Band Wagon*, *Some Came Running*'s carnival, the "I Met a Girl" number in *Bells Are Ringing*), to Coppola's palpable delight. In the original, all that artifice had a purpose, to heighten either the stylized high spirits of musical comedy or the strident despair of melodrama. Coppola and Tavoularis are like the high priests of a decayed cult invoking gods long since dispelled with the passage of time. Those masters of art direction who once recreated the world on the Culver City backlot were forced to do so by economic and technical considerations. They wanted their constructions to be more photogenic than reality, perhaps, but the most elaborate and prized trick of all was to hoodwink the viewer into believing this just might be Broadway or Montmartre rather than a soundstage off Washington Boulevard—if only for as long as the establishing shot lasted. When Coppola lingers for a lengthy glimpse of the street where Garr and Forrest live—pastel stucco houses, buttermilk skies, and pavements hosed down to resemble the shiny streets of every forties' *film noir*—it's simply to impress us with how hard he's labored over this painstaking fabrication. This isn't artistry—just electronic arts and crafts.

When Orson Welles first forged through RKO's threshold in 1940, he delightedly exclaimed that the movie studio was the biggest electric train set a kid ever got to play with. He too was intoxicated with the process of film making and with all the machinery that could be marshaled to realize his notions of what the movies ought to be like. All that boyish exuberance was in the service of a very grown-up dream—a certain *Citizen Kane*. Coppola has used his own funds to provide himself with the creative independence that Welles thereafter lacked. One can sympathize with the desire, but what's the use if all that results is sterile, bloated fancies like *One From the Heart?* A flair for images, finally, doesn't compensate for a lack of vision. Freed for the time being from the ever so vulgar pressures of the moguls or the marketplace, Coppola has no one, it seems, to tell him he's full of anything but genius. ❏

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

CLASSIFIED

CLASSIFIED ADVERTISING RATES: $0.50 PER word. Six to eleven insertions, 10 percent off; twelve or more insertions, 20 percent off. Payment must accompany insertion order: INQUIRY, 1320 G Street S.E., Washington, D.C. 20003. Copy should be received thirty days before each semi-monthly cover date. INQUIRY reserves the right to refuse advertisements that we consider to be of questionable taste or intent. Additional information regarding advertising rates or terms will be sent upon request.

Business Opportunities

$100-$480 WEEKLY—LEGAL, EASY MONEY. Details with self-addressed stamped envelope. Write: C.I., P.O. Box 5787, San Bernardino, CA 92410.

Contents

*SPONSORING LITERARY CONTEST TO AN-*nounce new magazine. Prizes—$100. Poetry, short story, and essay categories. For information send SASE to CONCEPT, Bryan Baker, Editor, P.O. Box 114, Smithfield, UT 84335.

Education

DYNAMIC NON-TRADITIONAL DOCTORAL program directed by accomplished scholars. Write: Southeastern University, 5163 DeGaulle Dr., New Orleans, LA 70114.

Finance

FIFTH AMENDMENT—W4E INCOME TAX return information. Includes examples. $2.00. Write: Libertarian Library, P.O. Box 13630, Aspen, CO 81612.

PENNY STOCKS HAVE GREAT PROFIT potential. As low as 2¢. 1,000% annual price swings. New books. Free brochure. Write: Penny Stock Press, P.O. Box 430—B-6, Queen Village Station, NY 11428.

Health

LIVE LONGER! WRITE FOR INFORMATION: INDIVIDUAL DYNAMICS, P.O. Box 8350-I, Knoxville, TN 37916.

YOU CAN STOP SMOKING!!! SAFE, SIMPLE, practical methods. Complete report only $3.00. Satisfaction guaranteed or refund. Write: LMI Publications, P.O. Box 14485-I, Portland, OR 97214.

Merchandise

*FREE MAN'S CALENDAR FOR 1982. HAND-*some, tan wall calendar. $6.00. Order from: Michael Coughlin, 1985 Selby Ave., St. Paul, MN 55104.

"SEND BONZO AND BIMBO BACK TO THE Ranch" and "I ♥ Hart" buttons. $1 each. We do custom orders! Write Bill's Buttons, P.O. Box 122, Hershey, PA 17033.

TRS-80 COMPUTERS—BUY FROM LIBERTARIAN Radio Shack Dealer Charles Blackwell. Lowest prices. Call collect (803) 684-9980 or write 30 N. Congress St., P.O. Box 732, York, SC 29745.

Miscellaneous

*PSYCHOANALYTIC FELLOWSHIP—LIBERA-*tive approach emphasizes respect for persons, individual autonomy, and critique of medical model. Part-time work paid between $6.00 and $15.00 per session. Only cost is for individual supervision. Certificate upon completion. Individual psychotherapy work experience required. Resumé to INDEPENDENT CONSULTATION CENTER, 941 Burke Ave., Bronx, NY 10469.

Organizations

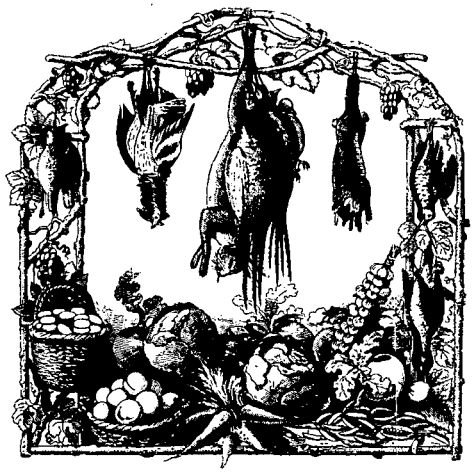
*FREE PRESS ASSOCIATION—NEW PROFES-*sional organization for writers, editors, reporters, publishers, and broadcast journalists interested in communication with other libertarian journalists and defense of a free, independent media. Services include quarterly newsletter "Free Press Network," media I.D. cards, and peer recognition of outstanding libertarian journalism. Members nominate and vote on annual Mencken Awards for Best Book, News Story, Editorial, Cartoon, and Essay. Charter membership: $20/year. Contact: F.P.A., P.O. Box 14248, Austin, TX 78761.

*REVOLUTION NOW! JOIN THE INTERNA-*tional Ecologism Political Party. Newsletter $5.00. Write: 1330 S.E. Bristol, #14, Santa Ana, CA 92707.

WORLD'S MOST SARCASTIC ORGANIZATION! $10.00 annual membership, $50.00 life membership (barter accepted). Send SASE for free lucky wooden nickel and details to NOT-SAFE, P.O. Box 5743IQ, Montecito, CA 93108.

*"BEYOND MONOGAMY"—AN OPEN RELA-*tionships publication. Includes interviews, letters from readers, personal ads—$9/year, sample copy for $1.00. Write: P.O. Box 6877-IQ, Denver, CO 80206.

OPPOSE ABORTION? LET US KNOW. SEND $2.00 for libertarian anti-abortion arguments. Libertarians for Life, 13424 Hathaway Dr., Wheaton, MD 20906.



Publications

*FRASHERI'S "SONG OF ALBANIA"—BEAUTI-*ful translation—one of Albania's renowned poets—19th century. Send $7.50 to 21 Sycamore Ave., Floral Park, NY 11001.

GET BACK TO THE BASICS WITH BOOKS from Paladin Press. Contemporary titles on financial and physical survival, self-sufficiency, home protection, and self-defense. Catalog $1.00. Write: Paladin Press, P.O. Box 1307-IC, Boulder, CO 80306.

"LIBERTARIAN CONNECTION"—13-YEAR-OLD open-forum magazine. Subscribers may (but needn't) insert four pages per issue free, unedited. "Libertarian Connection" had Rothbard, Hospers, Childs, Grinder, and Block before you ever heard of them. Read tomorrow's leading thinkers today. Eight issues (1 year)/$10.00. Sample $1.00. Write: 9850 Fairfax Sq., #232L, Fairfax, VA 22031.

ASIA PERPLEX YOU? "THE ASIA MAIL" —American perspectives on Asia and the Pacific—brings you up-to-date with a balanced picture of Asia. Serious analysis, light features, columns, book reviews, bulletin board of exhibits and performances, and a list of consulting editors that reads like a "Who's Who" in Asian-American affairs. Write: THE ASIA MAIL, P.O. Box 1044, Dept. RI, Alexandria, VA 22313. Sample copy available—send $1.50 for postage and handling.

*NOVEL—"MR. MONK"—DIFFERENT, RELE-*vant, provocative. Chimp-man flip-flop exposé of human sophisms. For copy send $9 check to Charles Santora, P.O. Box 2223, Ventnor, NJ 08406.

SLASH TAXES/BUREAUCRACY FOREVER! New—"The New Approach to Politics." $4.00. Write: KLS Publishers, P.O. Box 292-Y, Sarona, WI 54870.

*TWO BOOKLETS PROVIDING VITAL INFOR-*mation for the 80s: Nuclear Strategies and Humanism. Dynamic perspective. Send $3.50 plus $1.50 for postage and handling to PHOENIX FOUNDATION, Dept. C, P.O. Box 8000, Hermosa Beach, CA 90254.

WHAT IS REALLY HAPPENING IN El Salvador? How great a radiation threat is posed by nuclear power plants and their toxic wastes? Read about these and other crucial issues in "THE PROGRESSIVE"—America's leading independent magazine. New subscriber offer: 12 issues for $12.00. If you enclose payment with your order, you will receive an *extra month free.* Write: The Progressive, 409 E. Main St., Madison, WI 53703.

Real Estate

SURVIVAL RETREATS—120 TO 500 ACRE parcels in Mendocino County, Northern California. $750 per acre and up. Seclusion, abundant spring water, firewood, and garden sites. Write or call for free brochure of retreats and other properties. Libertarian Broker. STRIDER REAL ESTATE, P.O. Box 554-Q, Laytonville, CA 95454, (707) 984-6644.

Services

CREATIVE CUSTOM WRITING. LIBERTARIAN professional. Ad copy, letters, resumés—$25. Speeches—$50. Quality work. Instructions with order. Write: Davis, 207 Euclid, Birmingham, AL 35213.

LIBERTARIANS AND FREE-MARKET ORIENTED individuals: computerized resumé database serving pro-freedom organizations seeks your participation. Full range of opportunities and contacts. $1.00 for costs brings permanent, updatable listing. Send resumé and cover letter to THE CLEARINGHOUSE, 325 Pennsylvania Ave., S.E., Washington, D.C. 20003.

*PROFESSIONAL WRITING, EDITING, RE-*search—write to M & T ASSOCIATES, P.O. Box 8366, Chicago, IL 60680 or call (312) 327-2582.

Workshops/Conferences

THE FUTURE OF FREEDOM CONFERENCE gets bigger and better every year! Don't miss the fun! For more details on FoFCon '82 write: The Future of Freedom Conference Series, 405 E. 3rd St., #319, Long Beach, CA 90802.

*NATHANIEL BRANDEN INTENSIVE SELF-*Esteem and Romantic Relationships—March 19-21, 1982 in Dallas, TX. Contact MURRAY PRODUCTIONS, P.O. Box 1488, Dallas, TX 75221—(214) 351-0391.

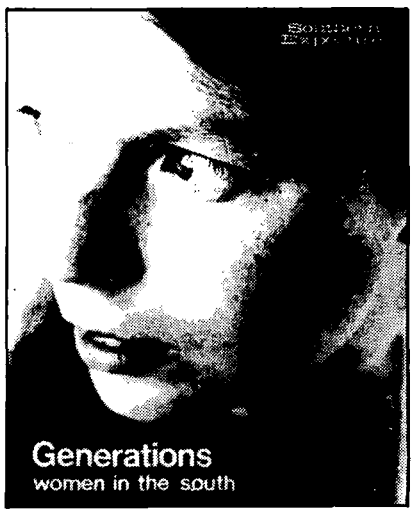
LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

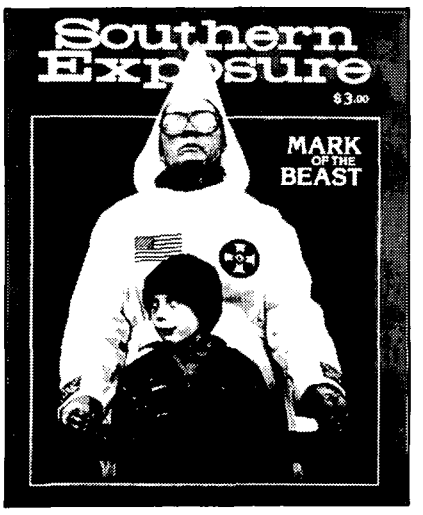
Nobody Writes About Freedom Struggles The Way We Do.

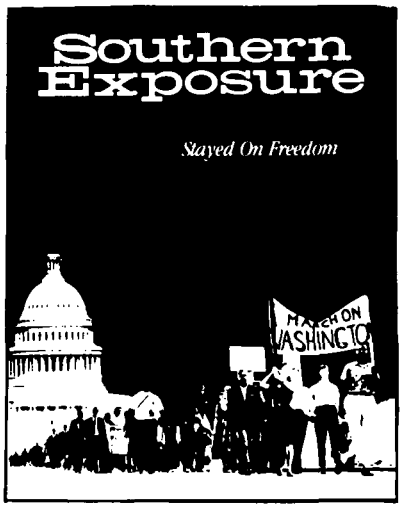
"...a must for Afro-American studies." — Mary Kenyatta, Dean, Williams College

"Visually, politically, in its range of voices and concerns, Southern Exposure is stunning." — Adrienne Rich, author and poet

"Enjoyable, powerful material, with first-rate reporting told by those who helped make history." — Alex Haley, author of *Roots*







A one year subscription brings six book-length issues for just $16.

SOUTHERN EXPOSURE • Box 531 • Durham, NC 27702

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

FIRST STRIKE
Why Our ICBMs Can't Hit a Damn Thing—See page 6
INQUIRY
MAGAZINE
OCTOBER 5, 1981 • $1.50
SEX IN AMERICA
NATIONAL BOARD FOR THE PROMOTION OF RIFLE PRACTICE
BRUCE McCALLISTER
UNCLE RON WANTS YOU!

Please send me the next year of *INQUIRY* for $15.00, 50% off the regular newsstand price.

- ☐ 1 yr $15.00
- ☐ 2 yrs $27.50
- ☐ 3 yrs $35.00
- ☐ Payment enclosed.

Bill my:

- ☐ VISA
- ☐ MasterCard

Account # _____

Expiration date _____

Signature _____

Name _____

Street _____

City _____

State _____ Zip _____

INQUIRY

Please return to: *INQUIRY*,
P.O. Box 693, Englewood, CO 80151.
Call Toll Free: 1-800-247-2160. In Iowa: 1-800-362-2860.

E055

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED